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# THE LAST WORD

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*Alice MacGowan*



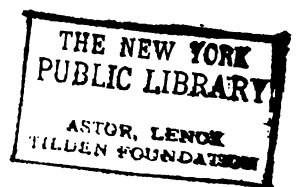
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## The Last Word









CARRINGTON WEST

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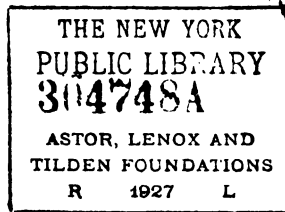
# THE LAST - - - - - WORI

By  
ALICE MACGOWAN

*Illustrated*



BOSTON  
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MDCCCIII



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*. . . So take the book. Its words are mine;  
Mine is the voice  
Which through its pages you may hear  
Grieve, or rejoice.*

*But heart and eyes of yearning love  
To feel and see  
All human grief, or joy, or hope,  
You gave to me.*

*I walked the city's ways, alone  
As hermits are,  
Because my heart was from your heart  
Exiled so far.*

*Though I was housed, and warmed, and fed,  
All want I knew;  
All hunger, cold and loneliness,  
In wanting you.*

*From all Life's victims' eyes I saw  
The wakeful pain  
Which tossed and slept not in my heart  
Look back again.*

*Yet could I hope for these, against  
Despair and death;  
Because my own hope cannot cease,  
Save with my breath.*

*My heart, like the great city's heart,  
Its deep unrest,  
Its trouble, half revealed, half hid,  
Beneath a jest.*



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# The Last Word



## CHAPTER I.

### In the Hand of the Wind

"Hail and farewell! I must arise,  
Leave here the fatted cattle,  
And paint on other scenes and skies  
My Odyssey of battle."

My hat blew off as we were crossing Packsaddle divide. There's a wind that lives all alone up there on Packsaddle, a wild, shiftless, senseless creature, that runs hooting and tooting up and down. It comes at you, snatching and screeching, the moment you top the divide, and races yelling away, carrying anything in the outfit it can tear loose. Now it fled triumphantly with its booty, at the rate of fifty miles an hour.

We had encountered, as we neared the station, several detachments of skylarking cowboys, seeking entertainment, as they seek — or meet — all the issues of life, a-horseback.

My fleeing hat drove directly toward the nearest group of these riders, and they, perceiving from my

frantic gesticulations and the sight of my bare head, what was (literally) in the wind, whooped as one cowboy, and as one cowboy launched forward after it.

The lunatic wind dropped its plaything just at that moment, and, before they could check, the whole troop had ridden pell-mell over the fugitive, and I realised that the enthusiasm of well-meaning friends may have its embarrassments.

This hat, however, was my hat, that is to say, a garment (if garment is the word) which had spent many months in close association with my head, and it was not to be easily downed. Mangled as it must even then have been, it stoutly signalled the next passing blast, which came racing along at that instant, boarded it, and capered gaily away on its wings toward some air-drawn point in the horizon line, which it had evidently decided upon for itself.

The boys wheeled and tore after it. There were ropes whirling now. They had forgotten the nature of the thing they were after, — a mortal hat, and the only headgear I had in which to travel to New York. It was with sinking heart I observed their earnest rivalry in its pursuit. No hat ever fabricated of straw, I assured myself, could come whole out of the impending encounter. And I was right.

"I've got the brim!" Bob Howard called to me, as the squad came charging back, "and Shorty, he's got the crown."

"I'm awful sorry it wouldn't stay together," apologised Shorty. "I'd have been perfectly willing to let Bob have all of it — every bit — but it seemed as if my rone cut right through it."

"Say, boys," put in Little Carpenter, "that hat's

a gone fawn-skin — it's a was — even if you went and scraped up all the pieces we scattered around back there. I forgot it wasn't a mountain lion while I was after it." And he laughed ruefully.

Snap Masters rode up gaily, glanced at the fragments in Bob's hands, and his face fell comically as he announced: "It's no use fooling with that stuff. There's a new millinery store started over at Canyoncita City — and she's a hummer, too. 'Tain't more'n five miles extry between here an' the station. I'll ride round that way and get her a hat."

"You will!" snorted Bob Howard. "Well, I like the cast-iron brass of that! I guess I'll get it for her. 'Twas me roped the brim."

"I rode over it more'n six times," retorted Snap, and Shorty put in a claim as the one who pulled it in two. I was forgotten in the earnest, not to say heated, discussion as to who should buy my headgear.

Suddenly Little Carpenter settled it. "We'll each get her one," he said. "Git there!" and he started his pony in what proved to be a second race.

King Preston told me about it afterward, at the station, while we waited for old Hank Pearsall who never came. King had a delightful style, a distinctly literary style. Indeed he was a born writer, an artist; the only man I have known, out on that border of the world, in whom the doing of strange, dramatic deeds, the actual living of a wild, vivid, picturesque life, could not dull a fine instinctive perception of the picturesqueness, the humour, the dramatic points, and artistic values of it all.

We, in our buckboard, drove on across Packsaddle toward the station; and the millinery posse, as

King styled it, thundered upon the door of the Elite Millinery Parlours in Canyoncita City, bringing Madame O'Brien to the door, with her Hibernian locks still in their French crimping-pins.

"She lives behind the shop," explained King, "an' she'd slung a small *rebozo* over the general dis-abilly an' disconnection of her cos-toom. When she saw the crowd of us, she staggered back, an' says, 'Hivin presarve us!' I guess she thought we was a mob o' vigilantes. 'The Howly Mother kape us!' she says, an' tried to clap to the door."

But it seems that Frosty, who had been doing the door-pounding, was ahead of her there. Frosty had been used to ride, as a ranger, with posses military, after goods other than millinery, and was familiar with all manner of strange encounters. Now the toe of his boot was between the door and lintel as they strove to connect. The boys stood in a semi-circle and announced that they had only come to get some hats for a young lady.

"She looked at us plumb wild," reported King, "an' she sorter whispered, 'Some hats!' So I explained. I told her we'd each take a hat, an' let the young lady have her choice. She bristled up at that. 'Well, then, you'll do no such thing! You'll not rob a lone widder of her goods, an' carry 'em off the Lord knows where, not fer *anny*-body to take their ch'ice of!' says she.

"'Oh, we'll buy the bonnets all right, ma'am,' says I; an' the boys sorter jingled the money in their pockets, to back me up. You never saw such a change in a person. She was all smiles, and full o' good talk. She was helpful, you know, thataway. Oh, she was plumb excellent in counsel. 'Walk

right in, gentlemen,' she says; an' she took a hitch in that insufficient *reboso*, where her costoom didn't seem to connect, an' made fast with one o' them big prod-poles you ladies spike on hats with. We left the ponies standin', an' the six of us — all boots an' spurs an' sombreros, looked like to me — went in fer millinery.

"We stopped in a bunch inside, sort o' sheepish. But now 'twas the Madame spurred us on. She began by showin' a big 'picture hat,' she called it, to Bob Howard — that blazin' red, frizzly one.

"'Blue's my favourite colour,' objects Bob, very solemn, 'an' this don't show any blue about it.'

"'Blue is it!' says the Madame, a-flutterin' like a prairie-hen; 'Oi've the jewel of a blue parrit that Oi c'n jist tuck in, t' give it th' taste!' An' she brought out that long-tailed, blazin' blue buzzard, an' pinned it into them blazin' red things — cactus blossoms, look like. She was plumb religious over it, Miss Carry; she rolled up her eyes an' told Bob she'd seen the Lord Leftenant's loidy, in Dublin, a-goin' to mass of an Easter marnin', a-wearin' the very mate o' that on her head.

"That was a plenty for Bob, an' he paid for the hat, all solemn, an' saw it boxed. He wanted to make a quiet sneak with it, but Frosty was guarding the door all right, an' told him flat that we was all goin' out together, an' no favours shown.

"I'd picked out a little bonnet that was nothin' but flowers — great, long mosquito-netting tie-strings to it. I didn't like Bob's red-cloud, blue-buzzard thing; still, it somehow made mine look small. 'There don't seem to be enough of mine,' I says, sort o' discontented. Then I had an idea.



'Hold on!' I hollered to the Madame (she was selling that yellow velvet thing she called a tam-o'-shanter, with purple flowers on it, to Snap Masters). 'Say, wait! I want about a peck measure o' these flowers and things,' I says.

"She looked a little jolted for a minute, but she riz to the occasion, an' measured 'em out all right in a bonnet box, an' passed 'em over, with about 'steen yards of thin stuff an' a paper of pins. I got Frosty to let me out by promisin' not to stampede, an' leavin' my bonnet inside. I had time enough to do my work, for Rush Clark bought that big green an' white hat, an' had them wavin' plumes put on special, before the thing come up to his fastidious taste. Frosty couldn't find any hat at all that answered to his notions, an' one had to be got up entire for him.

"When they were all suited at last, an' started for the door an' the ponies, I was done; an' I guess you'll agree my job was no slouch, neither. The boys give one look, an' then yelled like Comanches."

Gazing on King's "job," I was constrained to admit that it was, indeed, as he had said, "no slouch."

Armed with his peck of millinery and quarter-mile of veiling, he had trimmed and caparisoned his pony till it resembled the steeds of Aurora, or Spring in a modern French fresco. His fingers, trained by long practice upon his own garments, had used the pins and wires skilfully. A pair of glowing purple Mercury wings garnished the pony's knowing ears, a garland of roses encircled his ewe neck; puffs of vapourous tulle fell over his shoulders like monster sleeves, and were looped back toward the saddle,

and bound about with bunches of posies and shining ornaments. His tail was shrouded in misty white, and a rope of flowers ran from it to the high cantle.

The pony, it seems ("You can't surprise a Texas bronc," said King), had accepted his unusual attire with a cynical indifference born of many and strange adventures; but the millinery hunters went wild. They cast their burdens upon the ground, and turned with joyous whoops to secure, each for himself, a similar outfit.

King shouted in vain that it was late, that they must mount and ride if they were to reach the station in time for my train. He even confessed the weakness of claiming that the boys were infringing upon his original idea in thus decorating their steeds. "It was a stampede," he confided to me, half sadly. "There was no turnin' 'em."

"Old train never was known to be on time," declared Shorty; "an' I'll bet Hank Pearsall hasn't got there yet, anyhow."

This settled it. Bolts of diaphanous stuffs of every known tint, bushels of flowers and feathers and buckles were brought out; Madame was encouraged to assist; and when King set his disgusted face toward the station, he had met the fate of the pioneer in any field. For he found himself (like all great originators) surrounded by a school — a cloud — of imitators.

To make up the time lost at Madame's, they rode hard, and, as men and horses warmed to their work, the great, light, square, or round bonnet box each man carried became an intolerable nuisance. Finally, in desperation, King attached his sombrero to his saddle ties, cast away the encumbering box, and,

perching the toque it had contained upon his head, tied the filmy strings beneath his chin.

When the others snickered at sight of his tanned and weatherbeaten face in its vernal framing, he told them sternly that he was going to get that bonnet to the station, and get it there in good shape, but that he'd as soon pack a windmill and pump as that old box. And those who had jeered yet looked enviously at him as he swung ahead, his tulle streamers flying, while they shifted their light but trying burdens from one aching arm to the other.

Bob finally broke his box, endeavouring to attach it to his saddle ties. Then he fastened his flaming trophy upon his pony's head — "Blazin' blue buzzard an' all!" recounted King.

Snap Masters, a man of resource, took off his sombrero, which chanced to be of the stiff, steeple-crowned variety, and spiking his yellow tam-o'-shanter atop of it with the long hat-pins, set it back in place, and buckled the strap once more below his chin. This rational plan appealed to all, and was promptly followed by the three others. Quirts and spurs were brought into use, and the posse settled down to that means and end of all cowboys' frolics, a go-as-you-please race.

I sat waiting at the station, in the soft light of early morning, when this fantastic, flying squadron of the imagination came tearing across the open prairie toward us, the ponies shedding flowers at every jump, so that the cavalcade left a wake like a bridal procession. It swept in from the west, an ambulatory equine rainbow, which blazed upon the face of the plain, and shamed the fires of sunrise.

It was truly the maddest thing I ever saw. But

it was, for that very reason, perhaps, good medicine for an insidious little chill which, during that long wait, had begun to creep over my spirit. So we rose up and yelled a lusty welcome. The boys who were holding the herds of cattle, had all they could do to prevent several stampedes. The milinery question was disposed of, with much argument and cross argument, and we proceeded to other matters.

I had driven in from the ranch a little after midnight, that the "local freight," which passed Emerald at about five o'clock, or, as the boys put it, "at early sunup," might be flagged for me.

It was shipping time, and the outfits from nearly a dozen ranches were camped on the open plain all about Emerald, getting the long trains of "beef" off to Kansas City and Chicago.

For Emerald, hardly more than a railroad station, Emerald, upon whose insignificance uninstructed eyes would look with contempt — a station, a little hotel, one or two humble looking stores, where hundreds of thousands of dollars' worth of ranch supplies are sold yearly, and a scattered handful of little houses, all looking preposterously small and lost on the vast green-brown plain — Emerald is headquarters of the biggest ranch in the world, and of several others that are extensive even for Texas; and it is the greatest shipping point in the State, that is, for shipping directly off the range.

As I stepped on to the platform in the gray dawn, I could see the sidings filled with hundreds of cattle-cars, and the levels about the station covered with tents and men and cattle.

Over to the left was the Broken Circle camp;

back of them were the boys of the Bar 13 ranch. The Lazy F and the Cross 5 were camped together; and on the outskirts hovered a small Mexican outfit or two.

Your genuine cowboy will work all day and skylark all night; so I was inclined to think that my departure for New York, in search of fame and riches, was seized upon by the boys as rather a god-send in the way of amusement. I am sure they made the most of it for this reason; though it is but fair to say in this connection that people in Texas, when they like you, like you very much, often quite vociferously.

All the boys that I knew — and some that I did not — had brought me things. The Bar 13s had accumulated almost a ton of Navajo blankets. Navajo blankets are just the thing for camping. They are woven so thick and closely that they will turn water. Nobody, surely, would doubt that a good supply of them was the thing most needed by a young woman going to New York to engage in literary and journalistic pursuits.

The boys from the Broken Circle, which is over near the breaks of the Canadian, where there is still good hunting, brought me a fine collection of cat, coyote, and "loafer" hides, dressed mostly with the heads on, so that they looked formidable enough as they lay huddled and grinning in the uncertain light. Lefty Adams's horned toads were delightful. They were nicely tamed, and trained to some simple tricks. "Gentled an' well broke," he called them. There were six of them, in a box which he had made and decorated in leisure moments; and over the little door he had painted, with many flourishes, "Hotel Wal-

dorf." There were several pairs of magnificent steer horns of tremendous size and spread, picked specimens, with the beautiful double curve, lovingly polished and mounted. There were deer hoof ink-stands and jewel-receivers, buffalo and antelope horn hooks, and other odds and ends.

Presently the "local freight" came wabbling and muttering and coughing along southward, and pulled up at the station. Whereupon it at once became evident that some unusual demonstration had been planned. Feverish excitement immediately prevailed. The air, which before had contained merely about sixty per cent. of Texas dust, was now also thick with flying inquiries and exclamations, after this manner:

"Where's Hank Pearsall?"

"Who's got my dawg?"

"Leave in ten minutes? Yes, a whole lot! Say, Billy, swing yer rope into that engine cab an' jerk that feller out fer me!"

"Where's that buffalo head?"

"Say, now, that's mean! I brought a whole passel o' prairie-dogs, an' Jerry's went an' turned 'em all a-loose!"

"Where's Hank Pearsall?"

"Take them horned toads off o' that. It's grub!"

"Roll up them blankets, an' make her a seat. Don't you see she's tired o' standin'?"

"Push them hides out o' her way."

"Did you rope that engineer? Well, then, hog-tie him. I tell you, this presentation *a-dress* is a-goin' to be delivered if this train don't *never* git nowhere!"

"Where's Hank Pearsall?"

These wild and apparently unrelated questions, exclamations, and adjurations strove and wrestled together in the immediate vicinity of the station; then went out and lost themselves on the open prairie. For me, I sat on the roll of blankets, and felt (for once in my life) very small and very quiet.

"Gentlemen," protested the engineer (he was hog-tied, as had been directed, and lay on the platform, while Frosty sat on him and smoked sociably), "Gentlemen, I can't stay here; it's a matter, y' might say, of life an' death!"

"You bet it is," corroborated Frosty. "The boys don't feel like standin' any foolishness."

"I tell you, you blame fool boys, I'll bet I'm on the time of the north bound express right now."

"Oh, no, you ain't. You're on the station platform, an' I'm on you," laughed Frosty, giving him a comfortable punch with an unspurred heel.

We waited with patient industry for Hank Pearsall, who, it seems, was the orator of the occasion. But I have already told you that Mr. Pearsall (the most famous range cook in the West Texas cattle county) never came, and my triumphant departure lacked the crowning splendour of Hank's inimitable oratory.

This was probably even a greater disappointment to me than to the boys who had "the blow-out" in charge. For Hank and I were old and congenial friends. Our attachment had commenced, simultaneously with our acquaintance, at my first round-up. It was a big round-up. Hank was cook for the Broken Arrow outfit, but he was also master of ceremonies and lord of the feast. And this potentate signalled his approval of me and my horse-

manship by presenting me (I was a slim slip of a girl) with a sour-dough man, inconceivably fat, mounted on a horse also of sour-dough biscuit, likewise dropsical in appearance, but careering through space like a racer, obedient to the artist creator's hand. Since that time, nearly ten years ago, the course of our true love had run perfectly smooth. I had heard Hank tell many inimitable stories, and speechify on several "happy" and "auspicious" and "important" occasions; and greatly as I valued those things the boys had brought me, I would, in my secret heart, have been willing to give them all in exchange for old Hank's parting *a*-dress. That speech would have been to me blankets and food and drink — yes, and friends.

The thing which the presentation address presented was a buffalo head, one of the finest I ever saw, as big as a small cottage, and apparently weighing tons. I was absolutely enthralled at the idea of possessing so fine a head; but it was nearly as convenient a bit of bric-à-brac to carry about in one's satchel as a house and lot.

The government is certainly by the people out on the West Texas plains. Functionaries and officials carry small terror to the wild and windy soul of the plainsman. The president of the road himself would be treated well only in proportion to his deserts as a brother mortal. He would receive only what he could command as a man, or win as a good fellow. What, then, could the conductor of a mongrel freight and passenger train expect? The same, — neither more nor less. As Lefty Adams once said, pronouncing upon this subject for the whole Panhandle, "Bloated monopolies don't bloat much out here, nor they don't monop none at all."



The conductor packed my blankets and hides, my steer horns and other curiosities, into his combination car with great meekness. But at Brack Jacox's gift of a glass-eyed *pinto* cutting pony, warranted to outrun anything in the Panhandle, even this unhappy conductor of a train through West Texas rebelled.

"This ain't a cattle train," he objected.

"It carries *you*," retorted Brack, with free cowboy wit. "Anyhow, Pinto's a gentleman, and couldn't go on anything less'n the vestibule limited. I'll wait till it comes along."

"Say," drawled Frosty, "won't Pinto lead all right? Why don't you tie him on behind?"

Brack shook his head decidedly. "Never do in the world," he replied. "He has some speed, Pinto has. He'd be pulling to get ahead, and slew the old rattletrap off the rails."

While this contention was in progress, Eugene Barnes slipped up to where I sat, and put a palpitating little handful of a *pelon* dog into my lap — one of those fragile, high-strung, sensitive, hysterical, hairless little creatures the Mexicans so love, freely sharing with them bed and board, as well as the affections and the secret hopes and fears of their hearts. I happen to know that Eugene is more than suspected of reading poetry. But Eugene doesn't know it; he is too prompt and willing a performer on the six-shooter ever to have this sort of information brought to him. Now he said to me in a half-whisper, easing the little, trembling, big-eyed thing from his hands, where it clung caressingly, into the strange world of my lap:

"His name's Texas. He stayed with me when I

was sole alone for three months, keepin' sign camp for the L Q on the Staked Plain. I reckon he kept me from goin' crazy. 'Course there's a heap o' difference between the Staked Plain and New York. But I've been thinkin' a lot — 'specially since you been a-goin' there — an' I've got the notion that a man, er a lady, could likely be as lonesome there in that ocean o' folks, folks, folks, as they could up on that ocean o' grass — that hell o' loneliness — where you don't mebbly see a human face fer months together. He's a sight o' comfort when you're lonesome, Texas is."

At the name the small creature quivered in my arms, and rolled his big prominent eyes on Gene.

"You freeze to him, an' he'll freeze to you. No — no — no — I won't take him back. I'm goin' off up the trail with a herd of Six Bars next week anyhow. I couldn't very well take him, an' there's nobody I want to leave him with. You stay with her, honey. She's a square man, an' she'll treat you white." And he turned away and left us together.

I had never been able to like the little hairless creatures, despite their delicacy, elegance, and intelligence; but now, for the moment, I hugged this one close, and fancied (when I felt his small heart beat hard against my arm) that his thoughts and mine were of one fellowship.

Harvey Parker finally made what he called a few remarks, in the place of that presentation address which old Hank Pearsall was to have provided. The engineer was untied, the various train-hands, who had been out among the cowboys, were called in; the fire in the engine was, in Southern parlance, "chunked up;" we got up what the released engi-

neer called "some steam," and grumbled and stut-tered away southward.

And so I left Texas.

Yea, but I carried Texas with me. The dark levels raced past my window. My heart sank and sank. I have wept but few times in my life. It seems to be a kind of expression, and a means of relief for a too-full heart, usually denied me. But now, a forlornness so vast and appalling was upon me that I could not stem it at all, and some great, bitter tears fell down upon the little *pelon* dog's back. Whereat he wakened, looked up in my eyes, and cried in a little undertone, only ceasing when I dried my tears and comforted him.

Then he trembled and slept again in my arms. And I learned — too late, ah, too late! — that which has been the tragedy of many enforced companionships — that he snored.

## CHAPTER II.

### “The Panther’s Feet”

“Love’s wings are over fleet,  
And like the panther’s feet,  
The feet of Love.”

My journey southeastward to Fort Worth, and thence northeastward to Kansas City, proceeded with most gratifying peacefulness, and with an even and continuous sinking of the heart which was very astonishing to me.

The easy-going Texas conductor had let little Texas go unchallenged; and we started out of Kansas City at dusk, so that possibly that conductor hadn’t noticed him. The car was full of tall, big-hatted, deep-voiced ranchmen. They had been to a meeting of the Cattlemen’s Association at Kansas City, and were on a junket to some place twenty or thirty miles east.

They were innocently well pleased with themselves. It was a car-load of bluff, hearty, masculine, high good humour. And under the immediate influence of so much hilarity, my spirits ebbed and ebbed. For the first time, I fully appreciated the mental attitude of Texas.

He cowered and trembled in my arms, plainly divided between contempt and pity for the robust, noisy, happy crowd around him.

The one exception to the prevailing jollity occupied the section opposite my own, — a quiet, distinguished-looking gentleman, with an accusing air, as though the ballasting of the road-bed, perhaps (among many minor shortcomings of the kosmos), were not done to his taste.

He wore a handsome, rough travelling suit and a cloth travelling cap drawn down low on his face; and on the seat before him were some very elegant impedimenta.

I was wiping away a furtive and solitary tear when I caught the gleam of his eyes below the capvisor, and I thought — with a sense of intolerable indignity — that he smiled.

I hastily requested the porter to make up my berth; and when he had done so, crept disconsolately into it.

Next morning, while accomplishing the skulking and constricted dressing permitted to the occupant of a Pullman berth, my attention was attracted by two voices outside my curtain, speaking of me.

Of these two voices, the one which I recognised as that of the Pullman conductor went by my ears unsignifying as the rattle of the train. The other spoke in tones to which I needs must hearken. With all their volume, there was a plangent quality in their very sweetness which beat upon the heart and demanded tribute. I cannot believe that such a voice would pass any consciousness unmarked. But where it found its own — where it was heard indeed — that soul which heard it must be moved, and rise trembling to answer. It was a voice to set afloat a pulsating ferment in any woman's being; and then, with its deep, thrilling tenderness, to rock to quietness all perturbation.

It made my heart beat quick to know that those tones spoke of me at all; yet the matter of the remarks, which they just now purveyed, was such that a seraph's tongue could not have put them forth in a way to please.

"Against the rules, you know," was the declaration from the conductor which first caught my attention.

"Don't take it away from her," remonstrated the golden-voiced one. "Poor little soul! She is some schoolgirl being shipped East to school. And she is the homesickest, forlornest small person — leave her the dog. It isn't bigger than a — well, say a curtain-tassel. It would be very reasonable to suppose you never saw it. If —"

The voice dropped to a mere murmur; there followed a pause, some rustling movement, and, possibly, another low-spoken word or two. Then the conductor laughed a little, and said, "Guess I can manage not to see it. Did you say the poor little thing is going to school?"

"Yes, she was crying last night, and trying to hide it. The dog doesn't weigh more than seven ounces, but he was tons of comfort to her when she got well started away from Kansas City."

The conductor passed on. I glowed with indignation. I, who was going to New York to succeed in journalism! Not to go into journalism, you understand; almost anybody may do that. I bit with unnecessary force upon the hairpins between my teeth. I would show that individual with the fine voice whether or not I was a poor little soul. And the remembrance of those tears (or, more exactly, that tear), which I had actually shed the night before, increased my height by several inches.

When I had made my toilet all that it could be under that head-bumping upper shelf, I emerged with a haughty bearing, which was slightly impaired by my incautiously treading on Texas, and being much disconcerted by his shrieks. Recovering myself, I gave my neighbour across the way a cold stare, and received in return a very genial "Good morning!"

I was astonished to find the owner of that voice, and the publisher of those very patronising remarks, a young man, almost boyish looking. He was neither much older nor much taller than myself, I decided, which added to the offensiveness of his calling me a "poor little thing."

In spite of the interest in my affairs which he had expressed to the conductor, he did not, after his first greeting, look my way again for some time, so that I had all my haughtiness and rancour to myself, along with an excellent opportunity to study him.

I draw now upon later knowledge of his face in describing it. It is well-nigh impossible for me to go back and remember exactly what were my first impressions of it. A young face, a very stern face, the handsome chin coming forward with a resolution almost cruel; fresh-coloured, clear-eyed, but grim, reserved, unsocial. Some few hairs in his fine brows left the sleek company of their down-lying fellows, grew long and strong, and stood forward, a thing you have seen sometimes in the brows of wilful, choleric old men, but which had an odd effect upon this smooth young countenance.

The air about him of distinction, of race — lin-

eage — and breeding was as unmistakable as occult and undefinable. And he bore, as assuredly and as indescribably, the mark of high place in the material world. He would have been recognised in Patagonia, I decided, studying his half-averted, indifferent face, for a man of weight and honours in that world, one who moved and commanded men and affairs.

Finally, when he rose, still without looking at me — I think he took me to be very shy, and was sparing my blushes — he proffered the book he had been reading, and went on down the car, and out to dinner. The train was halted at the dinner station, so that, looking after him, I got his real bearing and walk, something which, in spite of its lightness and grace, must be described as a belligerent roll.

I turned to the book he had laid beside me on the seat. You may resent the hand that brought it, but a book is never a creature to be slighted. It was a worn little leather-clad volume, whose very sides and edges appealed straight to my heart, for it was very evident that it had been specially bound for a loving owner.

That is the dearest thing about a book, and one of the many advantages books have over people. We are never jealous of the number of those who love our books. The people we love, some of us, at least, would like to put in convents or prisons, so that no eyes but our own jealous ones could look upon them and appreciate their beauties; but there is always, for us, something to love in the people who have loved our books. And, conversely, the sight of a worn little volume, which some other human being has plainly loved, brings a gush of affection.



With some trepidation, I opened the pages. It would be a mathematical treatise, of course, or a technical handbook of geology.

Dropped in across the title-page was a card, which bore the inscription, "Francis Garnett Randolph, The Pakenham, New York." The name was strangely familiar. I wondered where I had seen it; and then forgot my wonderment when I found the little book was the *Rubáiyát* of Omar Khayyám.

I turned the leaves. It was marked, all through, in a sort of cipher, and thumbbed and turned down, and defaced with much loving, as my own copy is. The marks, of course, gave me an insight into the character of my neighbour. Francis Garnett Randolph, — where had I heard that name before?

When he came back, I was disposed to be friendly. He brought with him a local morning paper and an air of preoccupation. "Thank you so much," I said, presenting the little book, although I could have wished to keep it.

"Not at all," he returned, with an elderly-uncle air; "have you read all you want to in it?"

With the inquiry, he gave me a rather shrewd look, which made me fancy the *Rubáiyát* had been advanced as a test. "I know it all by heart," I answered, "but it is a pleasure to hold the book and look at it."

I saw in his face a gleam of interest in a school-girl who knew the *Rubáiyát* by heart. It was momentary, however, and he turned to his paper and forgot me.

I am the most gregarious of creatures. I love my kind. Indeed, when hard pressed, I love some who are not my kind at all. I think if I were



cast away on a desert island, and the cannibals were preparing to make *pot au feu* of me, I should chirrup up to them, and try to be sociable while the water heated. I wished my neighbour were not so surly. We had the whole end of the car to ourselves; I watched the flat, unlovely landscape race past my window, and teased Texas, who slept fitfully, and regarded my efforts with contempt.

I took the little Rubáiyát, and amused myself by reckoning how closely Mr. Randolph's marks therein tallied with mine in my own volume. I found that, while I had marked everything philosophic, optimistic, picturesque, or sheerly beautiful, he had set his pencil to the grim truths. I was bursting with this bit of information, when I looked up and found his amused eyes fixed upon me.

"Well?" interrogatively. Then he rose and crossed the aisle, remarking, "I will come over and talk with you awhile."

The assertion appeared to need no acceptance, so I simply made room for him, saying, "Certainly."

"Do you like Omar?" he began, with caution.

I nodded, adding, "But I don't like him for the same things you do."

"No?" still with that irritating manner of a grown man talking to a child. "How did you arrive at your conclusions as to what I like him for?"

"Your markings, of course," I answered. "Now mine — it is just about as shabby and well worn as this — has every bit of sunshine and beauty and whimsicality and audacity in it marked. You have taken the shadow."

"Not the shadow, by any means," he returned, smilingly; "the hard reality. I haven't much liking for moonshine and molasses. I want the truth."

"So do I. But why not a happy truth as well as a gloomy one?"

He looked at me, silent for a moment, and I saw in his face the protest that truth was never happy. He did not voice it, however, but merely answered, "Well, the truth at all hazards. For my part, if I cannot live by it, I am willing to die for it."

"Indeed!" I said. "To my mind, dying would be a very poor sort of compliment to pay to truth. You must be younger than I am, and I'm certainly not preparing to die yet. Why should you be talking about it?"

"I! Younger than you!" he cried. "Oh, come, come! That is a joke. I see now that I was at first somewhat deceived in the matter of your years. I took you for a girl going East to school, and kept looking at every likely station for the crowd of schoolmates and teacher to meet you."

This was the opportunity I had desired. I drew myself up with dignity, and announced that I was going to New York to take a position with a syndicate in a large publishing house. As I mentioned the name of my future employers, he looked oddly at me, but made no comment, except to say, "The literary life in New York is a very trying one for a woman. I have seen many of them break down at it—I go there myself sometimes."

"Why is it especially trying to a woman?" I inquired, sharply.

"A woman, a nice woman, is too sensitive, or rather, her sensibilities are too keen, for that life. Yours are. Your very humour betrays you. Why, last night," and he smiled at the retrospect, "I thought I had never seen so forlorn a little figure."

You need some one to take care of you. Every nice woman does."

"And a good many nice men," I put in, calmly; whereat he laughed, and owned that it was true.

"If it's all the same to you and the rest of mankind," I resumed, "I have no use, in the business of my daily life, for an aureole or pedestal; they both are troublesome to tote around. I would rather any time be a first-rate human being than a poor, second-rate goddess."

My companion looked at me for the first time with actual heed. He appeared to find my remarks worthy of consideration and extended reply.

It was past noon. The books or papers which at morning promised diversion had grown hopelessly stale; so he sat and talked to me with increasing interest and absorption.

He was crude, but forcible, with the endless charm of a salient and expressive personality.

For me, this charm was trebled, as I found at every turn the inference that he was not so outspoken with others, that the rare fascination of his unbending came in response to a charm as unusual which I held for him.

It was a very subtle stimulus and flattery, to see this reserved nature open its gates to me; to find myself, not only admitted within them, but presently all its inmates, clad and smiling, set forth to greet me, to hold council and make cheer with me.

We talked, as people newly met upon a journey do talk, of a vast array of floating subjects. And finally, when we had grown to feel well acquainted, we reached down for deeper things.

That the possessor of such a voice should break

the hearts of maids was a thing which could not justly be laid to his charge. A civil speech, in those tones, passed for the utterances of love itself.

I found him about two decades behind his time. A true Bourbon, his young, powerful mind was evolving and enunciating views and theories which have been superseded or exploded these twenty years.

"I am a conservative," he announced; "and particularly so in regard to the new movement in women's affairs."

"That is to say," I retorted, "instead of taking a new idea by the hand, you take it by the throat — that's conservatism?"

"Oh, you shall not discountenance me with an epigram," he smiled. "I'll warrant you speak very boldly, but are at heart and in act a conservative — otherwise a very woman."

After we had talked for some time with eager interest on both sides, "A woman needs love," he asserted, rather unexpectedly. "She needs to love and be loved, that her heart may be strengthened. Deny her that, and she is a poor, desolate creature."

"Oh, if that is all," I answered, easily, "I shall get on swimmingly. I always loved numbers of people, and many of them have no better sense than to take to me."

My neighbour gave me a smiling look. "Do you know," he said, in the lowered tone of one imparting a state secret, "I have been guessing something like that about you."

"You are a clever person," I answered, briefly.

"And do you know, also," he went on, "that, try as you may, you cannot quite get away from

the pedestal and aureole? I fancy there will always be some one, or two, or more unfortunates, setting you up and adoring you. For my part, I began at ten years old with a reverence for women and a belief in their semi-divinity. It's my experience, since my manhood, that has made me doubt those early ideals."

"Been finding a bad sort of folks in the world?" I inquired.

"I got a good many of my ideas of women from reading Shakespeare and Scott; but it has appeared to me of late years that, if the bard and Sir Walter were to look for heroines among the modern product, they would have to reconstruct their plays and their books."

"Dear me," I remarked, solicitously, "you must be an unpleasant sort of person, rather a wicked individual, to find all this badness in the world — or maybe," innocently, "this is just schoolboy cynicism, which will wear off when you have been about a little."

"That more than pays your debt," he laughed. "I only said that you looked like a schoolgirl — not that you thought like one. But I tell you, I honestly believe that the average club-man, with all his vulgar selfishness, has purer ideals than most society women, and is not nearly so daring and base in his wickedness as they. The thing which makes a woman worse than a man, when she fails to be better, is that she fights behind a barrier. She will accept no consequences. She would not brave the world for any consideration; but if a thing may be safely done, the smallest temptation answers for her. A woman like that will talk love to you by the yard,

while she has no conception of what the word means, and in her heart considers Juliet a fool."

My neighbour was coming out famously. "Have you," I asked, "any conception of the meaning of it? Can you define it?"

"Can you?" he countered.

"Oh, yes," I said, "I could if I wanted to. It is the thing best worth having in the world. It is the finding of some one whose faults you can tolerate. "Wait!" I cried, as he moved to interrupt me. "We are all faulty creatures, of course, so none of us need look for another human being without a fault. If we could find such a one, he would only act as a standing reproach to us, and we could not love him. We do not love people for their virtues, anyhow. We love them, as I asserted in the first place, because they have the qualities we like and the faults we can tolerate."

"A pretty good description of friendship," observed my neighbour, calmly.

"Oh, it is, is it? Well, suppose you try your hand at a definition, since mine does not suit. A man who can mark the Rubáiyát in the way you did ought to be able to give a most tender and moving characterisation of love."

"Love," said my neighbour, looking absently across the Illinois flats, "is a thing apart, a thing consummate — and — and terrible. It knows nothing of traits and qualities. It concerns itself as little with the virtues as with the faults of its object. If the gods send you this divine passion in its fullness, you would love her just the same were she a queen, or — the lowest of the earth. She would be beautiful to you equally in silks or in rags. Her

voice would be the dearest music to you, whatever it said. And once let this feeling be born in your heart, it can never perish out of it. It is immortal, as its source is immortal."

"Why, that is not love," I commented, cheerfully; "that is merely some mental ailment. I don't know about the divineness, but it would certainly be terrible. The next thing, you will be admitting that you have an ideal woman in your mind."

"I have," he said. "My mother is my ideal of womanhood. She married my father when she was eighteen. He has been gone from us two years. She was a beautiful girl, a gifted, charming woman; but she kept always the best of her for the home circle. She was not seeking a sphere. She made my father a loving, obedient wife to the day of his death."

"A *what*-ient wife?" I gasped.

"Obedient. Oh, I see, you object to the word. Why do you? He loved her. He laid no commands upon her which were not for her good. In a partnership such as that, one of the two must surrender individual will — why not say so? Why not use the word?"

"No reason," I returned, heartily. "After I had brought myself to do the thing itself, the word would certainly be a small matter."

"And love —"

"Love!" I cried. "The love that puts hands on the loved object — do you call that loving? Why, so are potatoes loved! I love them, we say, I want them for my dinner. I lay hold of them, to tear and pierce them with a knife, and torture them with hot water, or fat, or an oven seven times



heated. In all this, what thought is of the potatoes, — of their wishes, preferences, development, life?"

"There you go —"

"I tell you the love that lays hands on the beloved, that seeks or hopes or expects something in return, is the love that enslaves. And there is no love, deserving the sacred name, but that which liberates."

"Oh, this new —"

"If I love a man" — his frowning face cleared — "if I love him, I set him free. He must be himself, free, whole, unmarred, individual, thrall to none, least of all to me who love him. And I —"

"Now listen to me a moment. Take our two selves, for instance —"

"For instance," I echoed, encouragingly, and he glanced at me keenly to see if it were possible I could be sarcastic.

"This is not personal," he asserted, with dignity.

~~"I said 'for instance'."~~

"Of course you did," I rejoined, soothingly. "Certainly, you could not be more impersonal than that."

He looked me over, and decided that there was nothing to be done with me. "Well," he began, "if you and I were married, I venture to assert that you would want to give me the deference of a nominal obedience —"

"I should be your slave, of course," he added, hastily, as he saw the signs of rising revolt in my face, "but it would be like your rich, generous nature to crown me a king."

I had the sensation of a child who has been shut up in a closet, but given a sugar-stick to keep it

stuff, prison company. "I should never play a king when a queen would take the trick," I muttered, angrily, and refused to speak for any lure till we had passed Joliet and were steaming into the last stopping-place before Chicago.

Then my neighbour, who had given up his first careless attempts to resume our conversation, said, softly, "Did you know that I am getting off at Chicago — or, rather, that I am only going so far East, just now, as Chicago?"

"No," I answered; "I'm sorry."

"Oh, we are to meet each other again." And, in reply to my puzzled glance, "It is written in the stars. Why, I could tell you a great many things about yourself, of which you have not seen fit to inform me. I even know your name."

"It's on my bag," I cut in, jealously.

"I haven't looked at your bag," he smiled; "but I know that your name is Miss Carrington West, and that you left Emerald City at some unearthly hour Tuesday morning to go into —"

"No, not to go into journalism! To succeed in journalism!"

"I wasn't going to say journalism," he defended himself, laughing. "I was going to state what office you were to enter, but I remembered just in time that you had told it to me yourself; so you would see no wizardry in it. However, I am to see you again. We are to be great friends. We may live to be very old people, quite side by side, and die on the same day."

"I think I told you that I had a prejudice against dying," I answered, rather crustily. "You may die on your own day, if you please, and let me scuffle for myself."

He laughed indulgently at me. "I wish you would play," he begged finally, "that we were cast away on a desert island, just we two, with all the rest of the world out of reach, or swept away. We'd be pretty frank with each other under those circumstances, wouldn't we?"

"It's like playing 'Truth Upon Honour.'"

"How is that?"

"Did you never play it when you were a child? You put all your hands in stacks (that sounds as if we had eight or ten apiece, doesn't it?), and, as each player withdraws his hand, he answers truly — truth upon honour — a question which the other players ask him."

"That's it, exactly," he exclaimed. "Let's play it now."

The little table on which my lunch had been spread, hours ago, was before us. He laid upon it a smooth, muscular, handsome right hand. I put one of mine over it, his left covered that, and then with mine the stack was complete.

"You have 'first goes,'" he said, wickedly.

"No, I don't," I answered, serenely. "You always withdraw the hand at the bottom of the stack. Wait a minute, I haven't decided what I want to ask you." Then, abruptly, "Are you married?"

He laughed a little, and flushed. "No," he answered, with sudden seriousness, "I am not married now, but I hope soon to be."

The words in themselves were perfectly innocent. He was no doubt telling me of some girl in New York to whom he was paying court. Yet, as I sat there, with his eyes fixed upon my face, I would have given all I possessed — the toads, Navajo

blankets, rattlesnake skins, even the buffalo head — for extra composure; and that which I had fled to the winds, to leave me blushing like a schoolgirl indeed.

"What are you blushing about?"

"Nothing," I answered, resentfully. "I mean I am not blushing at all — I never blush. It's your turn to ask."

"Such lovely colour you have, and so much of it," he whispered, very softly, as I drew out my hand. He must have had his query ready, for it followed instantly. "Did you like me at first? Do you like me a little now?"

"You can't ask two questions," I objected, indignantly. "I won't be in it unless you play fair."

"Answer the first, then," he demanded. "No, the second."

"I shall not answer either of them," I replied, with dignity. "It is all childish nonsense, too silly for grown people to be indulging in."

My hand, which remained upon the table, was caught and held in a firm, masterful grip.

"Yes, you will answer. I may be younger than you, and not much of a fellow, but I am not going to be cheated in any such fashion. You did not like me at first, I could see that; but then, I didn't — I mean, I wasn't caring for anybody. I confess to having been in an unlovely mood. You do like me better now, don't you? And before we are done with it, you're going to l—"

The conductor opened the door just back of us, and said, with a smile, "You're getting off here, sir;" then, in answer to an inquiring look from me, "You go on in to the Central, miss."

My companion went over and gathered up his belongings. It seemed as though years had passed since he crossed the little dividing space of aisle — possibly four hours ago — to talk to me. And, as the thought flitted before my mind, he glanced at me above the valise he was closing, and said, with his rare, illuminating smile, and indicating his possessions with a little motion of the graceful head:

“I thought, like Rip Van Winkle, to have found them mildewed and decayed. But mine was an awakening — not a sleep.”

The train beginning to slacken speed, he left his preparations completed, and came to me to say good-bye. I did not rise. He did not sit down again. As, in the dusking shadow of late afternoon, he bent over me, I raised my face, resolved to smile a pleasant farewell; but he looked deeply into my eyes, so that the smile did not come.

It was a great, terrible, wondrous thing which had entered into this my world, and moved and shaken it so. If Love's self had willed to come and sit down beside me in my solitude and isolation of heart, he could not, meseemed, have chosen to come otherwise than in this semblance. What aspect could he have worn more subduing than this nature, with faults so palpable, weaknesses and discrepancies so manifest, but such winning and compelling sweetness reserved; this young, fine, salient personality, almost pungently masculine, and almost saturninely reticent, which warmed and opened and smiled to me — to me — to *my* touch?

The grave, melodious voice was a caress upon the ear — upon the heart. These eyes, protean in colour as in expression, had but to relax the sternness

of their regard under those choleric brows for their every glance to be an endearment. This voice which caressed me, these eyes which caressed me, and this head, whose movement as it leant toward me, was the most gracious caress of all; the rare smile which lightened over the grim, powerful, half-resentful young countenance, so movingly sweet — surely this would be love's chosen guise and mien. As the hours passed, and that lovely voice talked on; as, turning to answer, I looked up at the beautiful head bent down to me, and encountered the deep, changing eyes still fixed on my face, a panic would suddenly seize me. This presage which vibrated in the air I breathed — this sweetness and longing and promise — what were they? What the keen half bliss, half pain, that thrilled through me when I met the smile of those eyes, or when that deep voice said "love" or "my heart?" (He pronounced it hawrt, lingering caressingly upon the broad, soft vowel, and almost eliding the r.)

And, as the instinct is at such a time, I would search his face jealously, but furtively, demanding if it were with him even as it was with me. Was this glamour upon him, also? Did something tremble in the air about him? Was he stirred and shaken — taken away from himself?

Now, as I looked up into his eyes, that defeated and refused the smile with which I would have met them, the air throbbed again with that alarm and that question.

But an answer was written plain in the face bent toward mine. "I am leaving you — now," he faltered; and for one swaying instant that my eyes could not turn away from his, it seemed that he must take me in his arms and kiss me.

Then, with a quick breath, as of pain, which I heard my companion echo, I withdrew my gaze. We were once more in the world of realities. I gave my hand, which was taken closely and warmly in his vital clasp. We smiled now; and he made his adieu quite as though we were old friends. "I shall see you soon in New York. No need to give you an address" (he had not asked if I would write to him).

I saw him from the window. He never looked back; I recognised that as characteristic, and felt a strange little premonitory chill, which I regarded as impertinent.

I sat and watched his departing figure cross the platform and pass through the gates. Yes, belligerent was the word to describe the squaring of those shoulders, the swing of the whole form; and yet — was there ever another like it?

I made as though I would have turned to Texas and my book, but my soul was not deceived. It knew that all interest had gone out of both, that it had got off the train, crossed the platform, and walked through the gate, where the fat official in brass buttons stood.

The Significance of All Things had walked away with Francis Garnett Randolph, whom, in the security of my own mind, I called thenceforward Frank.

## CHAPTER III.

### “Now We Are Come to Our Kingdom”

“A power  
Girt round with weakness; it can scarce uplift  
The weight of the superincumbent hour;  
It is a dying lamp, a falling shower,  
A breaking billow.”

HE was an elegant young person, this new editor of mine with the old Knickerbocker name, acute, clever, perfectly groomed, an excellent type of the highly evolved American. But I was fresh and green from my Texas pastures; too broncho to feel any awe of him, I treated him much as I would treat one of our cowboys.

Whether or no he felt this as a bleak alteration from the atmosphere of myrrh and frankincense, the reek of the burnt offering in which an editor lives, he assumed toward me, with what I decided was flattering precipitancy, an attitude of kindly patronage.

“Of course you feel very small and very lonesome here just at first,” he remarked.

“But I don’t,” I rejoined; “I haven’t at all.”

Without seeming to hear me, he continued resolutely, “You see the importance of the individual



shrinks surprisingly when he is so infinitely multiplied, when he is presented to your observation as one variation among five millions, or as an exception — of forty thousand exceptions — to the rule of five hundred thousand.”

I hastened to interrupt, “ I don’t care — ”

But he ran right over me. “ And this sort of shrinkage in relative value of the ego gives, to one accustomed, like yourself, to make quite a figure in his country neighbourhood or small town, a sense of painful littleness and insignificance — the lost, snowed-under feeling traditionally the lot and portion of the obscure stranger in a great city.”

He had said it now, and leaned back at peace.

“ But I tell you,” I reiterated, “ I *don’t* feel that way at all.”

My editor tipped the top of his head back a little more, half closed one eye, and examined me shrewdly with the other. “ You were told you would, and you’ve been determined not to,” he suggested.

“ Certainly,” I assured him, “ I am told so and condoled with over it continually. The sensation was most unanimously promised me when I came here, by everybody who saw me off from my native wilds, by everybody else who knew of my coming away, and I confidently looked forward to experiencing it; but I haven’t — I never have at all.”

“ Oh, you haven’t? ”

“ No, I haven’t,” I repeated, stoutly, though aware of the sarcasm in his tone. “ I hold him but a poor creature who stands lacking in sight of all that he desires, who cannot take possession by the eye. For me, I have come easily into my fee here.”

"Oh, yes," agreed my editor, somewhat quizzically. "It's evident you own the town."

"I do. I've been here five and a half days, and I've made it all mine and taken stock of most of it."

"I shall be glad," said Mr. DeWitt, meditatively, "when you meet the president of our company. I wish he could hear you now, or rather, I shall enjoy it very much when he does hear you — I take it these seizures are frequent?"

"Seizures!" I echoed. "It is a calm and stable mental condition."

"You make me think of —" he began, broke off, and then inquired, "do they have such things as Bibles out in West Texas?"

I nodded.

"Well, a certain ancient writer named Isaiah describes you pretty well. How does it go? 'Behold thou shalt call a nation thou knowest not, and nations that knew thee not shall run unto thee.' Is that it?"

"Yes, that's it," I acquiesced; "but David's way of putting it hits my particular fancy: 'A people whom I have not known shall serve me.' (*Serve me, mind!*) 'As soon as they hear of me they shall obey me. The strangers shall submit themselves to me.'"

"I see," agreed my editor once more, but with wavering firmness. "And now that you've got the town, how does it please you?"

"It likes me well and always," I replied. "Even when I come up through the swarming East Side, I do not despair. I am only moved to deep pity by the squalor and discomfort in which the people live, by the sight of wretched, slovenly

women, and most of all the herds of little dirty, unchildish children. I then and there lay it upon myself to remember these my poor subjects, and more, if need be, to absent myself from felicity for awhile, that I may devise means to mend their cruel conditions."

"Yes," mused Mr. DeWitt, "our president is the only person in the shop really fit to talk to you. He's a Southern man, like yourself. He's got exactly your own Alexander-looking-for-more-worlds-to-conquer attitude of mind."

"Thank you," I hurried on. "Now, you know, when I walk up Broadway after a matinée, studying the meeting and passing streams of beauty, fashion, and elegance, I am only delighted — nothing is further from my thoughts than a feeling of envious isolation. 'Here you are, my dear people,' say I, 'the flower of my kingdom; high-bred, daintily clad, happy and prosperous. Where else will you find such fresh cheeks, glowing eyes, grace of bearing, and such beautiful and luxurious attire? After all, it is a happy people, and I a favoured sovereign!'"

"Right, I believe you!" breathed Mr. DeWitt, faintly — he died hard, but I had held his head under till he could barely gasp.

Notwithstanding this one momentary triumph, the truth was always big before my mental vision, that he was the editor, — let all the writers tremble and the strong writers be afraid.

So I walked into the office very quietly, on the day following the day which had seen my first batch of copy sent in, and it was with some hesitation that I approached to address him. But he made me easy at once, calling out, heartily,

“Good morning! Your stuff’s all right! It’s rattling good stuff! We’ll run it next week.”

When I sat down beside his desk, he added, in a lower tone, and most kindly, “I give you my word, Miss West, that this copy of yours was a relief to my mind. The bringing of writers — local celebrities — to New York, has usually been, so far as my experience and observation go, an unsatisfactory move. The writer transplanted loses that individuality and flavour which brought him the offer; then he and his employer fall to blaming each other for something that was not the fault of either party, but of the mistaken plan.”

“Yes, I know,” I agreed, “I thought of all that — it was all in my mind — but I wasn’t afraid of it. Besides, if I had nothing but a little local colour, and if going to another place would expose the false pretence that I was a writer at all, why, the sooner I detected myself, the better.”

“Well,” and he tapped the little pile of copy beneath his finger-ends, “so far from deteriorating, you seem to have received a fresh impulse. I like the way you have seen New York with Texas eyes; it’s piquant.”

I had noticed, as I came in, sitting at a desk near Mr. DeWitt’s, but with her back to us, a young woman with peculiarly abundant and beautiful hair, of a pale tan colour, the arrangement of which in a huge Bath-bun on the back of her head suggested to my mind that she might be an Englishwoman.

As my editor made that remark concerning the unsatisfactoriness and general futility of bringing local celebrities to New York, this young woman started quite violently, turning upon me a pair of

naïve, English-tan-coloured eyes, of exactly the same tint as the hair, in which was a look of mild incredulity. At the time, I attributed this to my failure to look the part, and vainly sought in my limited repertoire for a somewhat more celebrated expression, that I might display it at once, with a view to her enlightenment.

I was endeavouring to look as celebrated as possible, when Mr. DeWitt, moved by that irresistible impulse which prompts people to tell you something displeasing they thought or said of you at first, because it is past, remarked meditatively:

"By the way, Miss West, do you know who, in this office, was most active in making you the proposition that brought you East? It wasn't I. Much as I admired your work, I opposed the plan; and I am glad you've proven me wrong."

"Miss Salem, was it not?" I hazarded; "that was the name signed to the first letters I received."

"So it was!" agreed Mr. DeWitt; "but your most extravagant admirer — if you will forgive the qualifying term — the one who had unlimited faith in your future greatness, and your desirableness to the Salem Publishing Company, was our president."

"Mr. Yardley," I assented. "I read of his death just before I left Texas."

"No, not Mr. Yardley. He had been out of health for more than a year before his decease, and had withdrawn almost entirely from the work. I mean the gentleman who was acting president at that time, and who has succeeded to the office; our art manager, Mr. —

"I beg your pardon, Miss Bucks," for she of the Bath-bun had touched him on the arm, and laid upon

the desk beside him a neat pile of copy, plainly preparatory to departure.

Miss Bucks and I were then made acquainted, and as she seemed a pleasant, wholesome girl — she was English — I was glad to know her. That lost, snowed-under feeling which Mr. DeWitt had so cheerfully urged upon me at an earlier interview, had ached and fretted in my heart all day. It could hardly be homesickness, for though I had as yet made no home here in New York, I had left none in Texas. Whatever it might be, my defence against this strange empty sensation was work — much work. And the office was a pleasant place, with clever, busy people about, and the kind of work I so love going on everywhere before my eyes.

It was a large publishing house, with many ramifications, out-branchings, and departments. I had observed, over in the corner of the main room, when passing in and out, a person whom I unconsciously christened “ the big man.” He sat endlessly at the same drawing-board, and now Miss Bucks informed me that he made the fashion pictures, and that nobody in New York had such style and *chic*. His board sat near a big desk at which he sometimes wrote. I regarded a man who made fashion pictures as in no way related to myself, or my work; and when I occasionally found his mild blue eyes fastened on me over the top of his drawing-board, or end of this desk, I wondered if he were making me a study of “ How Not to Do It,” in one of the fashion articles he illustrated.

I was a little surprised when, one morning, some time after my meeting with Miss Bucks, he got up and came across to me, where I sat waiting on Mr.

DeWitt. He was, indeed, a large man, more than six feet in height, with a big square head, vast shoulders, and a great, deep, soft, rambling chest. The frame was mighty, and would have been majestic had the spirit of majesty been within it. He had a very fair face, full and florid, clear blue eyes with quick-expanding pupils like a child's, and a child's fair, soft hair. There was a short, inadequate nose, and a blond moustache under which an amiable, irresolute mouth hesitated sweetly. This was Bushrod Floyd, cousin of the new president of our company; owing, as it was hinted to me, even such inferior station as he held in the house to this relationship rather than his own merits.

When I came to know him well — and that was very soon — I found this giant's disposition was most vulnerable, sensitive, and appealingly approbative. He had a body which was a grand and perfect thing, a soul strung like a wind-harp to answer in harmony every air of joy, of liking and approval, to tremble and shiver at the jarring touch of reproach and pain, and to rave and jangle wildly under the gusts of remorse.

Such a temperament as this exposed him — poor soul! — a pathetic negative, upon which life was to print any picture she list. And life's pictures, when asked for in that way, are grim.

A man well born, of many fine talents and trained abilities, there was something supine in his spirit.

The world's prizes go to him who demands them, declares himself worthy of them, and for them risks the ridicule which waits upon a failure to make good his challenge. It was evident that the bare

thought of avouching himself a postulant for honours and successes would have covered poor Bushrod Floyd with confusion. He was far too timid and too inert to put forth that effort which claims the best; the worst could be depended upon to seek him; and a passive attitude drugged his sense of responsibility.

I could believe that his abraded sensibilities would make him as chaff to the fire of a soft word, an ogling glance; but, these cheap bribes failing to present themselves, I could never imagine him bestirring himself in any degree to seek them.

What, then, would be the specific expression of such a temperament's defects? Ah, you would know beforehand; you would never need be told. Drink — yes, of course — drink.

A man of such a disposition would naturally look to liquor as an armour for his weakness, a shield for his oversensibility. A thousand failures, a thousand humiliations which it might work upon him, would yet not teach him the futility of this hope.

When I became more familiar at the office, I was told that the only trouble with Bushrod Floyd was that he had been known to go on wild sprees. Nobody seemed to appreciate that the lapses were prepared in those months when he sat patiently at the drawing-board, and saw his inferiors pass him in every race.

They looked at the spree, at the drinking. They said, “If he only would not do that.” There was never one to understand that these stumbles were not causes of defeat, but only ultimate confession of infirmity, of incapacity.

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I alone, I believe, understood how, back in his timid soul, he was always making half-hearted, fumbling offers at life's opportunities, and (still in the country of his mind) being defeated and covered with shame. I came to realise, as clearly as though he had told it all to me, that his months of seeming spiritual sloth were full of such half-hearted attempts and their humiliating results, and to see that when these failures finally piled mountain high before his shrinking eyes, there could be nothing for it but one last cataclysmal failure in a spree.

A singular and significant feature of the matter was that there should be so much more talk of Bushrod's drinking than there appeared any fact to warrant.

For my part, I saw and continued to see, nothing of it — there *was* nothing of it. Yet those about him, who certainly always liked him well, seemed ever apprehensive that he might at any moment break out in a wild debauch.

In truth, such an outbreak was not continually apprehended. There was nothing to justify such anticipation. He was just one of those brilliant, gifted, weak-willed, perverse, endearing creatures whose friends will always be mistakenly fearing for them that they cannot live their lives, as we apprehend for little children that they cannot walk without falling.

He spoke to me in a low, soft voice, which had a little haunting reminder of some one else. I found afterward that, through much difference, his tones held a family resemblance to the golden voice of my neighbour of the train.

"Would you like to look at these initials?" he

inquired, gently, putting in my hand a package of exquisitely neat white cards, upon each of which was a design for a letter. The drawings were superb; a tiny figure of a mounted cowboy leaping out at you, full gallop, through an O; a swinging lariat, whose curves formed a random yet perfect N; a tilted sombrero and Mexican quirt, thrown down in an inquiring Q; and a C that was a great, long-rowelled Mexican spur.

"Oh, but these are just what I like," I cried. "Who drew them?"

"I," he answered, smilingly. "I am glad they please you. They are for Hexter's new cattle-country book, 'Spur and Lariat.'"

"Have you more drawings for it?" I asked, eagerly; "I love to look at Western things." And I followed him back to his desk, where he placed for me a chair and drew out numberless dainty initials, head- and tail-pieces and enrichments. All showed the same fine drawing, the same perfect finish; but none of them, as I would then have said in my ignorance, amounted to much as art.

"Rouse is to do the illustrations for the Western book," he explained. "I haven't got beyond my letters yet."

I laughed appreciatively. The speech sounded quaint from him then; and later, when I came to know all the details I have already mentioned, it had a pathetic significance.

Now, I caught up and laughed over a thumb-nail sketch of a cowboy on a bucking pony.

"Good, isn't it?" asked Mr. DeWitt, behind my shoulder. "It reminds me of 'The Broncho Buster and the Esoteric Philosopher,' in your last week's

story. I like your turn in there; it's an original and piquant conceit."

"There's no original conceit about it!" I demurred. "A broncho buster — one worthy the name — is necessarily an esoteric philosopher; and conversely, any esoteric philosopher — of whatever age, sex, or condition — could, if he list, be a successful broncho buster."

The blue eyes fairly patted me on the head. "Stand right up to him!" they said. And the editor remarked, "Well, I shouldn't have allowed myself to be drawn into any talk on broncho busting. It's a thing you plainly know more about, abstractly and experimentally, than I do. I have as little knowledge of Texas ponies and the cattle business as you have of the New York streets."

"I've had some very vivid experiences on them," I said, reminiscently; "they are rich in copy."

"Yes, you ought to find good stuff that way. I know. I came here fresh once myself. I am glad I sent you out free-lance, no assignment and no routine. I don't see how you can go about in that triumphant, choral, halleluiah spirit, with that patent, life-preserving Texas trust and enthusiasm of yours, without meeting experiences."

"I can't," I agreed, heartily. "I suppose I walked and rode several hundred miles the other day, only to gaze at street signs. The mighty are indeed fallen. Cervantes is in a small shop — cigars, I think. Raphael is in the fruit line; Goethe is running a bakery; and on another street, Walter Scott, the Wizard of the North — the divine Sir Walter — is clouting breeks for the unwashed multitude. His sign reads, 'Suits Neatly Cleaned and Repaired.'"

"I know some people" — put in Miss Bucks, with mean caution, from the desk where she seemed to be looking for something — "who would not mind in the least if he had been trained to that in his youth, and continued all his life in the business." Then she went away before I could even get her range and distance.

"You find Solomon in the pawnshops, *sans* the glory?" from Mr. DeWitt.

"Yes, and now I am looking in all the butcher-shops and green groceries for Michael Angelo. He's here somewhere, and when I find him I shall shed a few preluding tears, and say, 'Shake, Mike; I'm just as proud to know you now as I should have been in the days when you sculped and painted and architected and wrote heavenly sonnets to Vittoria Colonna. "Lord, we know what we are, but we know not what we may be!"'"

"I call that noble," declared Mr. DeWitt.

"Yes, I realise that it is. But you see nobody knows better than I do that this catering to the amusement of a fickle and fractious public which is my trade — and Michael's, too, in part, at least — is kittle work — kittle work — as these signs have signified to me. And I dare not be arrogant, who have no assurance that I may not some day have to make sausages and head-cheeses myself."

"There's one thing certain," announced my editor, suddenly; "you want to keep that sunny trustfulness of yours — that tackling of life in general for a joke — as a sort of professional property. I see it is a fine thing to fish for copy with; but it won't do for common, every-day consumption — it isn't safe. You'll fall upon people and happenings

more wild and irregular than amusing or profitable. You're liable to be buncoed!"

"Oh, do you think so?" I cried. "I've longed ever since I got here to have a bunco-steerer or a confidence man. I should suppose it ought to be one of the earliest experiences of the greenhorn in Gotham. I've been at heaven upon my knees morning and evening to send me one; and I've tried with patience and intelligence to induce one."

"How?"

"Well — I don't think you need to look so insultingly amused. Of course I can't wear a big soft hat, and Texas-y boots, and look wild and woolly as a man could; but I've done my poor best, with a guileless and confiding expression, and was always in hopes."

"Now, really," he objected, dropping his voice to a pitch of grave remonstrance, "you are a little too — too — well, I advise you not, that's all."

Looking up, as Mr. DeWitt went back to his desk, I found Bushrod Floyd's eyes fixed smilingly on me, while something very like a faint wink accompanied the comprehending look with which he asked, "Did you like him after you got him? How did it happen?"

"Why, I never really got him; it was along of my being so homesick," I explained; then suddenly, "I imagine homesickness might be a really fatal complaint — when a body has no home."

He nodded. "Me too," he agreed, largely.

"It isn't just New York, you know," I went on. "I have no home anywhere."

Back in Texas I had left some friends, one very distant relative, and a little group of graves in an

old family burying-ground. The graves were made so long ago that I could only call up faint childish memories of the days upon which they were digged. My father's was newest among them, and I could recollect standing, a child of ten, in my little black frock which didn't fit me and smelled so oddly, to see that grave filled in. These and the memories, however, are scarcely things to be homesick for, and I could not have told you — no, not I — in what direction my craving heart reached.

"Same here," agreed Mr. Floyd. "I haven't had a home since I was a baby — a home that was mine. You've met our president?"

I shook my head.

"We are cousins. He is my Aunt Virginia's son, two years younger than I, a very young man to have reached the position he occupies. He's a wonderful, unusual combination of artist and business man."

I was beginning to hate this paragon of presidents. "But about yourself," I prompted. "Were you going to tell me something?"

"Yes, I was," he responded. "I see everybody does. Your sweet receptive kindness melts everybody's reserve. They hasten to hand over their griefs to your keeping. Well, I began being an orphan very young.

"It was a boy and girl love — that of my young parents. They were to have waited for years; but when the darkest period of the war came, and the poor, bleeding, desperate South was calling for the last drop of gallant blood, they were married, a few weeks before my father rode away on General Lee's staff — a boy of twenty.

"My poor little mother never saw him again.

He was killed at Gettysburg, before I was born; and she followed him when I was less than a year old. My aunt brought me up; and there's no dearer, lovelier woman living than Aunt Virginia. She was said to be like a mother to me, and my cousins like brothers and sisters. I don't doubt it was so. The fault was in me, I'm sure, that I always felt alone — yes, and homeless."

"So we are alike in that," I said.

"No," he demurred, with a little smile, "I claim a sort of precedence in desolation. The graves in my life were made so long before I came to know myself or others — to be a thinking creature — that I scarce know where they are. The people I have lost — my real dead — live right here in the world where I live, fasting, feasting, watching, labouring, marrying and giving in marriage, and taking no thought of me. They used to look at me across the table three times a day, and the play was that they were my kin. And that's the dearest kind of dead — you dare not ever be homesick for them!"

My woes were not exactly of this foliage — I wore my rue with a difference. In point of fact, — and to be brutally frank about myself, — the main tragedy of my life just then was that I had neither seen nor heard from my neighbour of the train. I was beginning to realise, too, that I had believed implicitly his parting words — that we were to meet again. But now in my bitterness I told myself that he was a shallow creature who got up a train flirtation as he tipped the porter, quite as a matter of course, and a natural part of any journey. "He did not," I said to myself, "so much as live in New York at all." But, even if that were true, he might have written me.

"It wasn't so much homesickness," I finally admitted. "It was about — about — a letter, a letter which might have been written just as easily as not, and which would have forestalled and prevented this painful condition in my ego."

"A letter," mused the big man, in a gentle undertone. "I write mighty good letters. If I'd known anybody of your name needed a letter, why I'd have written you one myself."

"Well, I needed it — oh, I needed it. I considered yesterday what manner of sudden death I could adopt (in case I got no letter) to provide undying remorse for those neglectful people, and, at the same time, furnish the greatest amount of material for enterprising young reporters; and I said, 'The bridge has it!'"

"You're fine and bold," murmured my hearer. "A modest cup of pizen would always satisfy me, at my wildest. Did you —"

"I came over here and found no letter. Then I started toward Brooklyn bridge, in what I maintain was a thoroughly suicidal frame of mind. Fixed, stony, desperate — I do assure you those terms are feeble."

He nodded gravely. "Been there," he said, "know how it feels. I *wish* I'd written you that letter!"

"Well," I continued, "I came, in the utmost possible gloom of soul, to the first short flight of steps. There — little thinking what boon fate had in store for me — I glanced darkly up where, lo, he stood, my beautiful and long-desired bunco-steerer, my confidence man in the flesh, just as I had read him described thousands of times."



"How seasonable!" laughed Mr. Floyd. "Almost too good to believe."

"Yes, wasn't it? I thought so, too. The transition from despair to joy was so great that I didn't credit the evidence of my senses. 'This is a figment,' I said, 'there's no such good luck; they are not to be found on the bridge. It is the mince pie our Presbyterian friends had for dinner' (I dined out most sadly the evening before)."

"And it was a figment? That's the joke?"

"No, no — listen; I gazed at him guilelessly. The man returned my look, but in altogether the wrong manner; for though he must have thought I had a cataleptic attack, he only smiled civilly, and considerately glanced out toward the shipping. I went up the steps automatically, with my head turning gradually on my shoulders, like one of those little brown owls that sit up at the mouth of prairie-dog holes. In my childhood I solemnly believed that if you continued to walk around those owls they would continue turning their heads to follow you with their eyes, until they wrung their little necks in two."

"So did I — so did I!" cried my companion. "I always believed a squinch-owl would do that!" And we laughed together with the subdued joy of expatriates in a strange land, discussing and doting upon important characteristics of the home country.

"But this man was only responsive enough," I went on, "not to seem really unkind and obdurate. He still apparently gave me the benefit of the doubt, and assumed that I was mistaken."

"Such coyness was unpromising, discouraging — and inexplicable."

"Yes, it was all of that, and my spirits began to sink toward their former low stage. 'It was the mince pie,' I kept on saying to myself, though my heart stood still at every footstep behind me. 'It was those insoluble foreordination, predestination, sanctification, and adoption cakes with the Calvinistic icing onto them; only them and nothing more. Heavens, aren't they enough?'"

"Plenty, I should think," with a smile. "No wonder your heart balked."

"I went on, but deeply discouraged; and the effort to keep my features in front of me, in spite of the prodigious, vast and overwhelming rotary impulse in the back of my head, distracted my attention so that I had walked more than half-way across the bridge, before I noticed the absence of any provisions for jumping off. I'd never observed that the footway is inconsiderately placed right in the middle of the structure."

"That's the good reason for having it fixed that way, my child. Otherwise a lot of us would be jumping off there every day," explained the big man, with a glance of the blue eyes that did not match the jesting tone.

"Well, if so," I conceded, "it served its purpose with me, and thwarted my —"

"I'm ready for you now, Miss West," Mr. De-Witt's voice broke in upon us, and this was the first of many fragmentary talks with the big man, half jesting, half confiding, and altogether enjoyable. They always wore the face of chance; they appeared wholly incidental and fortuitous, and generally filled in what would have been my idle intervals in the office.

## CHAPTER IV.

### A Superfluous Introduction

*"They hunt our steps, that we cannot go in our streets."*

GOING up to the office upon a certain Thursday, to take my copy, I encountered Bushrod Floyd.

We both began in one breath to say that Mr. DeWitt desired me to look at certain drawings that Mr. Floyd was making for some humorous Western verse; both laughed, and then he conducted me to his desk, took the pictures from one of its little-used drawers, and, having placed them before me where I sat in the seldom occupied desk chair, stood a little apart beside his drawing-board.

When I had examined, commented, criticised, and offered suggestions — as I had been asked to do, for these were rough, tentative sketches — I sat idly on, and presently poked a little deeper into the pile of sketches lying in the drawer — an indefensible thing to do. I realised this when, turning suddenly with a card in my hand, I found the owner and author's apprehensive eyes fixed upon me with the look of a child who expects a reproof. Glancing back to the card I held, I found it bore the sketch of a hand.

"Why — why — It is mine!" I exclaimed, recognising a ring.

"It's sure your dexter fist," confirmed the artist, though still rather uncertainly.

"But it—it's good!" I went on, stupidly, as though that were matter for surprise. Then with delight, as I looked closer, "You've got my crooked little finger, exactly. Father had just such a one; he used to say it was a family finger."

"Crooked!" echoed my hearer. "It's curved a bit—just enough to be charming and characteristic. But the others—they are as straight and slim and deadly as little arrows." And he seemed relieved that I had not been offended.

"Well, it is a wonderful sort of thing," I added, looking long at the bit of work. "I declare, it tells more, somehow, of the personality than many a portrait I have seen."

"You do me proud!" smiled the artist.

The hand paused relaxed upon a barely indicated sheet of paper, a pencil lying lightly in the fingers. "If my hand really looks as clever and intelligent and — and —"

"Exquisitely lovely," proffered Mr. Floyd, in an undertone.

"Nonsense! If it looks as—you know what I mean—as *know how* as that, I shall believe in it, and in myself."

"Well, it looks as much more and lovelier and cleverer than that, as —"

"You seek to make me vain and conceited, so that the entire force may have joy in the falling foul of me by Mr. DeWitt," I interrupted. And then, with no warning catch, the clock of destiny struck another hour in my life.

Turning to seek the editorial autocrat, and deliver

my copy, I saw entering the door at the big room's further end, the individual whom, in the privacy of my thoughts, I had been calling Frank, the person about whom I had been most persistently concerned. of whom I had said as I lay down to sleep, "He surely cared, and I shall see him again," and as I rose up, "Go to! it was a train flirtation; he was a drummer; he does not live in New York; and worst and most woful of all, I shall never see him more!"

And here he came, down past the long line of desks; the same gait which I had called a belligerent roll, the same deep, brown, violet, gray eyes, and young, fresh-coloured countenance, half scornful, half indifferent, wholly fascinating.

I must have been sub-consciously expecting something like this, for what I felt was more sheer panic than surprise. Indeed, I mainly longed for present escape — a desire shared, I thought, by the other party to the encounter — yet, if this were so, why had he come?

It was not till afterward that I formulated his offence against mere kindness. He knew who and where I was, how to find or reach me. He could have written, sent a message, called upon me in my home — yet he had chosen to let brute chance rule our meeting.

I advanced hesitatingly toward him; all this lay obscure and unexpressed, yet aching in my heart. But before we were near enough for a greeting to be required (which would publish to all beholders our previous acquaintance) a tall man with a head curled all over by close-rolling curls — a striking peculiarity in this day of short-cropped hair, rose

up from a distant desk and approached us. He noted and had pity upon my trepidation, and I must have seemed pitiable indeed. Smiling at me with sunny eyes (and, it seemed to me, the whole outfit of curls) "The editor is away," he explained; "but he charged me to receive any copy you might bring in. I am Mr. Corcoran, the cashier."

Strangely, in that strenuous moment, all the details of this new man's appearance and manner were taken account of by my tense faculties. He had an air of lovable benevolence, infinitely becoming to him, and an interesting contrast to my editor's manner of friendly satire.

Now, giving me a glance, as who should put a kindly arm about a timid, overawed child, he turned and presented me.

"Mr. Randolph, this is Miss Carrington West, our Texas girl. We were expecting her when —"

"Yes, I remember," the newcomer interrupted, pleasantly, offering his hand.

I took it. "Mr. Randolph is our president and art manager, Miss West. You are acquainted with his work, of course, Francis Garnett Randolph." And then I knew why the name had seemed familiar to me, and why my almost consternation was accounted quite natural in the office, where the young president was held in great awe.

My first impulse was to observe calmly (calmly!) that I knew Mr. Randolph; my second — spurred by the unruffled demeanour with which he accepted the introduction — was to meet him, in every sense, on his own ground.

In spite of his urbane, new-acquaintance manner, my late neighbour of the train lingered; and he

was pleased to give an endorsement to the trend of our conversation when Mr. Corcoran said, smilingly, after we had talked a few moments:

"We have been rather looking forward to your coming, you know, Miss West. We understand that you are a stranger here, new to the East. Shall you mind if I ask how you are situated domestically, and if you have any women friends?"

Before I could answer, Frank — or perhaps I err, perhaps I should say that it was Francis Garnett Randolph who spoke — remarked, sympathetically: "New York is hard enough on a man — when he comes to it for the first time, and without friends or acquaintances — but for a lady" (how oddly the word chimed on my ear, who had not heard it used generically since I left Texas) "for a lady it is simply too bad."

I hastened to tell the tall man that I was for the present domesticated in Brooklyn, where, through no fault of mine, and indeed without my knowledge or consent, a boarding-place had been procured for me, with the idea, I suspected, of allowing me to begin by taking New York gradually and in broken doses. I had, I said, a number of letters to people whom it had been supposed by mutual friends I should be pleased and benefited by knowing; and who, upon their part, would doubtless be cheered and diverted by knowing me. But they were all, I understood, persons who never did anything but amuse themselves, and I had refrained from presenting any of the letters, thinking that if I desired to work, such acquaintances would be the reverse of helpful to me.

"You're right, — you are surprisingly right,"

returned he of the smile and curls, heartily. "Yet," hesitating, "I believe that you would like my wife, and she you. She was a New Orleans girl. Suppose you come up to dinner next Saturday — it is my day off — and see? We wouldn't interfere with your work, you know, being, as it were, of the *hoi polloi* ourselves."

The "New Orleans girl" warmed my heart — my hurt heart. Mr. Randolph's endorsement of the idea was so warm as to suggest that he felt I needed respectable friends and associates — or so I told myself bitterly. Yet, in spite of my resentment, I did so yearn for consolation in my loneliness that I was fain to follow his earnest adjurations and say: "I shall be very glad indeed to do so."

Thereupon Mr. Corcoran made me out a careful itinerary of the entire journey from my boarding-place in Green Avenue, Brooklyn, to their flat in Seventy-fourth Street.

The items upon this itinerary were many and (to me) fascinating. When Saturday came I swept my mind of all remembrance of Frank, I even laid an embargo upon all thoughts of that distinguished person, Francis Garnett Randolph, and set out with a fairly light heart.

It was the itinerary that ruined me; yea, it was that well-meant but fatal document that procured my subsequent discomfiture. Had I known no more than that these nice people lived at 124 West Seventy-fourth Street, and had gone, as usual, on my devious and erratic way, all would have been well. I should have seen a great deal of the city, enjoyed a large amount of outdoor air and wholesome exercise, and finally arrived at my friend's house none



the worse for a somewhat roundabout method of getting there.

I took, as directed, the Ninth Avenue elevated — it was a good, free mover, well gaited, and held out well. I dismounted, again by direction, at Seventy-second Street, leaving it securely staked (this was my own idea).

I was fascinated by those directions. I read them all the way from Brooklyn to Seventy-fourth Street. If I put them away, I instantly forgot whether it was two blocks north or three, one block west or two, and had to get them out again.

To be brief upon a not altogether pleasant subject, all this walking about the New York streets, reading fitfully from a paper and gazing at buildings, culminated in something which must have looked to the Corcorans (when, like Sister Anne, they looked forth from their casement high) like a street brawl, or at least like a very animated street drama, in which their intending guest was playing the star part.

From this embarrassing situation Mr. Corcoran sallied forth and rescued me. Inside the door, that is to say as we gained the wings, he asked me in some amazement how it happened. I told. He leaned up against the steam radiator and laughed and wept and groaned, stopping occasionally to shake his curls and wipe his eyes at me.

While he was still at this, a lady came down and wanted to know also. I told her. She sat down on the lower step and carried on like a foolish person.

I alone stood by, quiet and dignified.

When they had recovered themselves a little, we

went up-stairs, and later we had dinner. My hostess was so very beautiful — even for a New Orleans girl — that I blindly deemed it scarcely possible she should have, also, goodness and sense. But it was demonstrated to me, in later days, that she had as generous a dole of each as the very ugliest woman I ever knew.

Beside her at the dinner-table, magnificent in company bib and tucker, throned aloft in a high chair, sat the sovereign Teddy, dispensing royal favour with a nod of his frizzly gold head. I am apt, through lack of experience, to be a trifle shy of babies, but Teddy had an urbanity of manner all his own, which put me immediately at my ease with him.

We were at the table when Mr. Corcoran finally understood that his directions had caused my recent embarrassment. "Oh, was that what you were reading from?" he asked, most unnecessarily.

"It certainly was," I returned, dryly.

"And how did you get on with them? Were they useful — otherwise than in attracting the attention of the guardians of the peace?" he pursued.

"I found them more than good and useful," I answered, "they were beautiful. But I improved upon them in places. 'Take Ninth Avenue elevated,' they said, and I did so. When I found it a free mover and well gaited, I thought best to stake it securely, where I left it, so that it might graze till I get back — you'd never have thought of putting anything like that in your directions — complete and enthralling as they were," I concluded, triumphantly.

"I — but you mustn't — you can't — they won't

let you — ” protested the young sister of the house, distressfully.

The laughter over my sally and its too literal acceptance having quieted down, compunction came upon my lovely hostess, and she offered me a little delicate sympathy with my salad, stating that she herself used always to get lost when she first came to New York.

“ Oh, thank you,” I hastened to reply. “ You are very kind to say that. However, it is all grist that comes to my mill. I used to try my little best to avoid trouble and live a quiet and peaceable life. But no longer — oh, not now! If I lose my pocket-book, my way, and my head (and I do); if I am even smashed up in an accident, and find myself mangled and bleeding, do I complain? ”

“ Of course you do — ” began Mr. Corcoran.

“ Indeed I do not!” I interrupted. “ The only cry I utter is, ‘ Give me a soft pencil and paper — bind up my wounds! This will make good copy!’ ”

“ And a broken heart would be so much stock in trade?” suggested Mr. Corcoran, in a somewhat offensive tone.

“ A broken heart!” I echoed, with a slight wavering, and a brief wonder as to whether I already looked heartbroken. Then I went on briskly, “ That’s what it would. When my young man turns out perfidious — ” my breath gave a little catch, at thought of Frank, but I whipped in my coward forces and held ahead bravely with the comedy — “ When he turns out perfidious (as he frequently does) and tears my heart into little agonised tatters, would I foolishly seek to win him

back, or unenterprisingly strive to escape the cruel anguish — merely because it is anguish?"

"But would you not?" timidly inquired the young sister. Since her late experience, she was rather shy of me, as a person who said strange things about familiar matters; but this was a subject in which she was much and presently interested.

"No," I protested, "and three hundred thousand times no! I am a woman, and I must needs feel it as a woman; but I am a writing woman, and I cannot blink its magnificent commercial possibilities. Do I moan 'Come back?' No, I cry 'Oh, wow, Alphonso, cruel one, you have broken my heart! But just go on, there's a good fellow; wring it some more, — don't mind my tears; for I tell you this is the real thing I am feeling now. I'll make copy as is copy out of this!'"

"Which might be described," allowed Mr. Corcoran, "as thrift of soul."

"It certainly is nothing less," I returned, complacently. "And thus do I yank, as it were, victory out of the clenched fist of defeat."

Mr. Corcoran simply made a wry face.

"I don't care," I persisted. "I think it's a great time — a great time — when there's a market for rages and megrims and vapours, if they are but properly dressed."

"And is there, really?" murmured the young sister.

"Is there? Well, I should think there is!" I exclaimed. "My dear Miss Phyllis, there is a fellow like an ol' clo' man going about buying up your second-hand heart-throbs at so much per throb, and your outworn emotions at so much an emote."

"She is a little crazy, Phyllis," explained Mr. Corcoran, gravely, "I had to go down to the door, you know, and get her from the keeper." And we all went into the parlour for some music.

When I got back to Ninth Avenue, I found that the air-drawn stake-rope which my jester's humour had placed upon the elevated was broken and the train gone. But — pursuing the same mood, one I loved and furthered, since it helped bravely to beguile a sore heart — another elevated — just as good every way — came along almost immediately, and I rode down-town on it.

All the way home my heart was singing a song, whereof the refrain concerned a certain grim, taciturn, overbearing young man.

Grim, taciturn, overbearing — that was the outer shell. Part of the time, when the strain was gay and hopeful, it asserted that, within, there was another creature, ready to come forth and smile at my touch, most winning, most lovable, most endearing, and all mine because shown to me alone. And it offered the further comfort that, when this well-remembered countenance should shine upon me once more, everything that puzzled and wounded me so would be explained. All would be well.

And the faces, the faces, the faces, how they challenged me and called upon me. The people in the cars, on the sidewalks, on the bridge, everywhere. I watched them with unflagging interest, unfailing sympathy, these subjects of mine in this my kingdom; and whether they behaved handsomely, or acted foolishly or wickedly, I found it to be all toward my entertainment, instruction, or admonition.

To-day I could find it in my heart to pity them — they do not know Frank. The best that can be hoped for them — and a very unlikely best — is that they may sometime meet Mr. Francis Garnett Randolph; but poor things, poor things, it is only I, picked out of the millions in the world, who can ever know Frank.

Thus, when the strain was merry. But when my heart sank low, it whispered to me that there was no Frank, that the Frank of my thoughts was only a silly vision; and it wounded me with recollections of the staid gravity with which that keeper of Frank, that outer shell, had received an unnecessary introduction.

## CHAPTER V.

### "A Roman Warrior—Sculptor Unknown"

"Poor captive bird! Who, from thy narrow cage,  
Pourest such music."

AFTER that first day's conversation it became quite the regular thing, if Mr. DeWitt was late or occupied with some one else, or I remained after he left, for Mr. Floyd to have something to show me.

He never disturbed me if there was any one else to whom I might address myself; but after a long series of these childlike overtures, he asked one day if I would not like to put into his desk a large packet of manuscript which I desired to leave at the office. "It's such a big desk," he explained, "and I occupy exactly one drawer of it. It seems a pity it should not be made of use."

His drawings were kept in a case, made specially for them; and I had expressed some little curiosity as to the contents of that desk drawer which he reserved. I spoke of it as I sat down, and leaning past me he drew it open. "There," he said, "pull 'em out and look at 'em. I'm sure it is better than they deserve."

I glanced down and saw little packages of manuscript, all showing the perfect finish characteristic

of Mr. Floyd's drawings. They were folded so that they looked almost like letters, though their length would rather suggest legal documents.

“ Try one of them,” he encouraged, as though he were speaking of an edible. Then to leave the way more open for me to do so, he turned to his drawing-board and ceased to regard me.

I plunged into the first package I drew out, and was soon absorbed. They were fragments of verse, recollections of a Southern plantation home, glimpses of a region and a life most familiar to me; the drollest and most perfect bits of negro rhyme, and some tender and touching poems of more classic form.

On one scrap of paper scarce larger than a visiting-card, in the finest of little characters were these six lines :

“ I tell you, I have lived house-mate to Sorrow,  
And those her gaunt, dark kindred, Pain and Care,  
Sat with us often, and my life did borrow  
From them its shade and bitter. Yea, I bare  
And died not, when to-morrow and to-morrow  
Brought to my secret hope but fresh despair.”

I read them through again, then looked across at the man who had written them, studying the bent head, the relaxed lines of the big frame, seeking to find what it was that wrote “ defeated ” across his personality; and tenderness, pity, the longing to help, ached in my throat.

“ Mr. Floyd ! ” I cried, “ this is cruel. Why are these things lying here in a drawer, with nobody to see them ? ”

The big man looked around, startled. Then



his eyes softened, he smiled as he caught the meaning of my protest, and attempted to pay me, or did pay me in his own curious fashion, a quaint compliment.

"Oh, don't say that," he remonstrated. "The whole world is looking at them right now — I am perfectly happy about them."

"Don't make a joke of it," I remonstrated. "Things like this — real creations of genius — seem to me like little children. They ought to have their chance in the world. You have no right to deny it to them."

"I am not joking," he replied, seriously. "If they diverted you for a moment — if they amused or touched or interested you — they have done their part in the world; and I should be perfectly willing to see them all burned. What is that you have under your hand? Which one of my small children pleased you most?"

"I love them all," I declared; "the funny ones best. But this," and I put forward the bit I held, "was the one I happened to be reading when I spoke."

He glanced over the lines, and smiled a little absently. "Fellow felt pretty bad when he wrote that, didn't he?" he murmured reminiscently. "I've got a longer howl, up here somewhere in the top part of the desk."

He searched it out and handed it to me. "Don't read it now," he cautioned. "You might burst into tears right here in the office, and I'd be responsible. Take it home as a — as a — Valentine, say." And I put the long envelope in my pocket.

I was now boarding with the Corcorans. It was

a happy day for me when they adopted me into the household of that little flat.

I observed that nobody else called it little. Far otherwise, they constantly assured me that this was a fair-sized flat. But to me it seemed finished and close and small as a cabinet — housekeeping in miniature. A pretty parlour, four bits of bedrooms (there was one to spare, and so I could be taken in), a cunning dining-room; a scrap of a kitchen that was a small domestic laboratory, as neat and dainty as the movement of a Swiss watch; all planned to the perfection of convenience.

“Yes,” I allowed, wistfully, “there is plenty of everything except —”

“Except what?” inquired my hostess, sharply.

“Well, room and light,” I brought out, bluntly. “Those are the two articles that wild people from the open plains find it hard to do without — room and light.”

Mrs. Corcoran merely looked amused.

After West Texas, where there is nothing but sunshine, space, and air, and where the interesting problem two-thirds of the year is how to bar out this great trio a bit, and make a little quiet indoors to which you may retire, this gloom and contraction were to me the most striking material features of my home life.

“You must bear with me till I get tamed and used,” I said. “Just now, these little dark bedrooms” — there were two of them in the flat — “where the gas must be lighted half the day, seem but chambers for the whispering of sad secrets!”

“Do they?” she laughed. “Well, that is a mistake on your part. They are only the bedrooms of

an eight-hundred-a-year flat. Of course, when you become rich and famous — ”

“ All right! all right! ” I cried; “ I’ll say no more. ”

But these, my people, were the dearest people; and they had taken me in and made me one of them, so that I had about me the kind and comforting air of home. Mr. Corcoran put it very modestly when he said he thought I would like his wife. Anything — anything — that lived in the house with her winning sweetness, her bright, wholesome, hopeful loveliness, must necessarily love her. And again, I was not so strange a being to them, since they themselves came from as far away as New Orleans; and, while that is considerably short of Texas, my passwords were not wholly unknown there.

If they sometimes seemed to vaguely exhale the inference that I ought to be impounded, it should be said that I never succeeded in fastening such an opinion upon them. I knew that they regarded me as a sort of superior savage, an amiable, amusing, and lovable barbarian. This to me! Me, who at home was wont to consider myself (and am sure I was regarded by others) as a person of refinement!

“ You move about so quietly, ” I complained. “ Do you never have a violent emotion — even a sudden sensation? ”

They only laughed. I thought of Francis Garnett Randolph. He was quiet, but it was a vigorous sort of silence. For all his grace and polish, that calm of his was pregnant with action, even with violence; and the possibility of its coming to utterance did not seem so remote, either.

But the others, the really Eastern people, appeared to never draw a deep breath. For me, I seemed to want room, to be always bumping my elbows, especially my verbal ones. I began to lose confidence in heretofore-trusted expressions and forms of speech. I often caught myself searching about warily in my mind for suitably dilute terms, and cautiously qualifying my voluntary statements.

“And to think,” I exclaimed to Mr. Corcoran, “that I had meditated going to Boston! If it is like this in New York, what would it have been in Boston, do you suppose?”

“Yes, it is well you began on us, Texas,” he responded, seriously, then for the first time using the by-name which afterward became habitual with him. “If you had tackled Boston at the start, gone there straight from the plains, why —”

“Well, then — if I had?” I interrupted, feeling resentfully that he made too much of this opening which my own generosity had offered him.

“Well,” he sighed, “I suppose they could only have muzzled and hobbled you, shod you with list, tied cushions on your elbows, connected you with a fire and burglar alarm, and hoped for the best.”

“You know that is a ridiculous, nonsensical mess of absurdity,” I remarked. “You make me weary. You are just like Genevieve. She wants to tame and train me — make what she calls a lady journalist of me.”

“Genevieve?” inquired my listener.

“Well, Miss Bucks, you would call her, of course — Fashions and Fancies — Household Department — down at the office, you know.”

“Why, yes, naturally I should call her Miss Bucks; and her first name is —”

"Do not tell me," I broke in, "I do not want to know. Genevieve suits me better."

As a matter of fact, when my eye first lit on Miss Bucks, long, rather informally put together, with her load of tan-coloured hair making her head look too large, and her dead-serious, tan-coloured eyes, I said to myself, "You are Genevieve;" and so she had since remained for me.

Genevieve would fain have lured me to the big stores where she got up her fashion articles. She said something pitying about the things I wrote for the office, spoke of my having so free a hand in the matter of my work, and added that I ought to deserve and make much of such liberty. Then she announced to me that I might go about on a tour of shops and stores with her the following week. I rashly consented, and was immediately seized by regret for my folly, and apprehension of the deadly stupidity of such a campaign.

But I was agreeably disappointed. To speak truth, the great bazaars, magnificent with fabrics fetched from the four corners of the earth, charmed my eyes. Yet from all these I got away comparatively whole and safe, and bearing the comforting assurance that Genevieve was pleased with me, and hopeful of my future.

It was at the Japanese store that I lost all this. I am so weak where Japanese fixings are in question. I do love their lightness and delicacy, the sharp, angular, refreshing grace of their construction.

I fell under the fascination of a collection of birds, snakes, bugs, animals, and goblins, in plaster, fur, feathers, and scales, averaging about the size of one's thumb, and weighing an ounce or so apiece.

The very least of these — no bigger than a thimble — were so expressive, so bursting with character and significance, that it would make you jump to suddenly encounter the sophisticated gaze of them.

From this gay and festive company, this gang of wild, scampish, demoralised cynics, this Hecate's rout of leering, gibing zoology, ethnology, and fancy-run-mad, I only escaped away when I had beggared both myself and my companion.

"Of course you are welcome to the money," said Genevieve, more in grief than anger, as she handed it over; "only, what you want with that great mess of little frumpy toys is —"

"Toys!" I cried, aghast. "They are teachers, philosophers, sages! Why, Miss Bucks, it's a whole university I'll be after getting for myself," and I turned feverishly to the precious assemblage.

I bought a crocodile (with a leer) that always gave me the most agreeable shivers; a skeleton sea-serpent that would be a more effective means of temperance reform than a whole inebriate asylum; an ape, a porcupine, a hippopotamus (with a heavy obese sneer), a dog of some revised and improved breed, a parrot of most villainous and depraved countenance, a swaggering, insolent, and dissipated owl, a fat and contemplative toad, a pig who knows the History of the Beginning of Things, has discovered the Whence and Whither, and solved the problem of the Wherefore (all for twenty cents, too), besides several others that I do not think would translate into English at all.

But the darling of my collection — chiefest jewel of the tribe — was a seven-inch dragon, so utterly frightful and appalling in his personal appearance

that all the little segregated uglinesses displayed by various individuals of the horde sank, by comparison, into mere commonplace. His scales, that stood up along his serpentine back in horrent rows, were little shells, scarce bigger than the shells of rice grains; his head was plaster; those eyes which he did glare with were china; and, from between hooked and grabful fangs, he lolled out a slim red muslin tongue, surrounded by a grin, the unspeakable malice and soulless venom of which (though I well knew it to be purely Pickwickian) made my flesh to crawl, my heart to slow up, my temperature to fall, and my hair to rise, every time I encountered it. Oh, he was bewitchingly horrible! Never, sure, did plaster and red flannel wear such looks of cool devilry. He cost eighty-five cents, too; and by virtue of his higher price, as well as his superior gifts was regarded by me — and by all of them, also — as the choice and master spirit of the assembly.

I looked at my gathering of embodied fancies, sins and follies, crimes, mistakes and failures, gay effronteries, sluggish indifferences and sullen despairs, and said to myself that under their uncanny influence I could write a wild, weird tale.

In the exuberance of my delight, I also said something of this sort to Genevieve.

"I do not in the least mind about the money," she repeated, with bald and remorseless sincerity; "but," fixing me somewhat coldly with those solemn eyes of hers, "I think you need something to cure you of such nonsense, rather than a lot of trash to make you worse, for you are certainly a little mad."

She stuck to this conclusion, and left me, refusing

firmly my invitation to come and see some things which I found interesting. In fact, she was so hasty and final in her rejection of my offer that it almost suggested alarm on her part.

So I went away by myself, down on Water Street, among tarry odours, woollen caps, and sea-faring commodities, to a little den of which Bushrod Floyd had told me; it could scarcely be called a shop. Its keeper — an Italian, yet in some sort a fellow countryman of mine — made the plaster casts one buys of street venders, on the corner of Sixth Avenue and Fourteenth or Twenty-third Street.

In those early days I hung about that place; almost I could not get away at all. And we would talk, my Lorenzo Bartolli and I, he speaking in a very little broken, hesitating English, but both of us using more the common language of the eye, the hand, the attitude.

For this small, crooked, musty Italian had a much better intelligence than the usual run of his kind. He hated and despised, like any true artist, the various examples of nameless trash he reproduced for sale, and loved the classic pieces. The week before, I had found, among a lot of rubbish, a small cast which, having become very dirty, had been bronzed. A little equestrian statuette — a good horse — a good rider; it struck a chord of home in my heart.

What did it signify that dress and accoutrement were of the time of the crusades; that no coiled rope hung beside the tall saddle-bow, no broad cinch circled the flank, no "slicker" flapped behind the high cantle?



At how many roping matches and cowboy tournaments had I seen and admired, in how many roundups, and on how many lonely trails had I met or ridden beside this figure's living counterpart and descendant! How frequently in the vicissitudes of frontier life had I experienced his unbounded kindness and generosity, or at remote ranches or incidental cow-camps partaken of his hospitality which is as the Arab's! And how often, on distant, wind-raked, sun-scorched prairies, had I seen him outlined (motionless and solitary upon some commanding rise from which that hawklike eye could search for straying sheep or cattle) against a morning or an evening sky!

Here were the same deep seat in the saddle, the long, blending lines of horse and rider, the slack rein on the savage curb, the same high heel and pointed toe, the broad hat, the lean, keen, kindly face, the strong, lean, nervous body.

He would not sell it to me, the little bright-eyed priest of that dim and dusty temple. It was "notta count," he said; and he gave it to me, with amazement in his face, tempered, I fear, with scorn.

"You care for these," he said, indicating his classic figures with a quick, backward sweep of his hand. "How can you love-a this? It is nothing—it is of the *Renaissance*."

"Oh, no," I said, as he wrapped it up for me. "It is of Texas."

He looked at me doubtfully and repeated, with a rising inflection, "Of Tet-saas?"

Genevieve despised it utterly. Mrs. Corcoran called it a "clock figure;" even Mr. Corcoran was coldly indifferent. As for Francis Garnett Ran-

dolph, whose conjectured preferences had a way of suggesting themselves to me as a dictum from which there could be no appeal, he would never see it, and of course it would be only a plaster cast to him. But I — I lived before I came to New York; and the horse and the rider of the Renaissance had for me another meaning, as fine in its way as Mr. Bartolli's beloved classic pieces.

He knew them all, did Lorenzo, and conned over — reverently as he would a calendar of saints — the names of those starry immortals, their creators. There, in that dingy little hole, ranged on a shelf, in front of a strip of dull red stuff, he had set a group before which I must needs worship.

There is no phase of man's spiritual life which is not typed for the seeing eye in the products of man's art. The soul, knowing not words, recognising only symbols, may be addressed by these, and will hearken to them more readily than to any human teacher. When forms of beauty no longer say to me, "peace," "truth," "love," I shall begin to question if my soul waxes not hard of hearing.

The day Genevieve and I parted, with our usual pronounced divergence of opinion, I stopped long in this unconsecrated temple of Father Lorenzo, high priest of Silent Beauty, worshipping at this most unorthodox altar (yet where I found set forth well-nigh all that appeared to me worshipful, as: love, courage, nobility, tenderness, hope, beauty of idea and of form), thinking a little heavily that it was weary work forgetting people who were daily before your eyes, and sometimes in their sweetest phase.

If I merely met Frank in the office for a formal

greeting, most of all when I saw how important a personage he was there, with the privacy of his special inner office defended by a suave young man whose business it was to politely pass all applicants for admission through a fiery furnace of inquiry and deliver them over to a private secretary if they once flinched — when I saw these things I was better. But when I rode up in the elevator with him, and heard a deep-toned word meant for my ear alone, when I found his eyes fixed upon me with jealous tenderness as I paused to consult Mr. De-Witt or Bushrod Floyd over some detail of my work, the old sickness of the soul rushed back upon me and enveloped me for hours.

I longed for some sure specific for this ailing, and I sought it doggedly in my work.

The door of my Italian friend's shop rang a bell to warn him of a customer's entrance. When he once saw that it was only I — now since I was become almost a member of the staff — he let me prowl for long, delightful quarter-hours alone amid the dusty white world of the shop. Thus investigating for myself in that place of fate, I rummaged out a small and dusty bust from a corner, and set it upon the counter.

I looked at my find, and a sudden qualm that was almost faintness came upon me. There was a helmet on the proud head, and some impossible curling hair under the helmet's rim. The stern eyes were sightless; but there was no mistaking the lift of that chin, its forward thrust, and the curl of the lip above it, the ineffable sweep of the haughty nostril, the power in that broad, white forehead, the browbeating, overbearing strength — and yet



“‘A ROMAN WARRIOR — SCULPTOR UNKNOWN’”



the beauty — the merciless beauty — of the whole countenance. It was my neighbour of the train — president of the Salem Publishing Company — he who was ever in my thoughts, who put me from my rest by night, and for whose sake I went heavily. It was he, but with the sweetness left out of him.

Mr. Bartolli came in as I finished dusting it with my handkerchief. He searched out a tattered catalogue and placed his white-powdered finger upon a line which read, "A Roman warrior. Sculptor unknown."

"Yes," I agreed, "the noblest Roman of them all — but I do not think the bust would have pleased his wife."

My Italian laughed. "He have no wife," he said.

"So he told me," I murmured, adding, "It's a good likeness, but it does not do him justice."

"You like him?" inquired Lorenzo. "Nobody else like him much. I sell him cheap. 'Bout ten cents."

And for the poor fee of ten cents I carried Francis Garnett Randolph — or the more unlovable part of him — home with me, and set him, not beside the Texas figure for all the world to see, but in a little niche amongst my books where old Omar's half-sad, half-smiling face in the *Rubáiyát* concealed him, and where I could, when assailed by any foolish sentiment or tender longings, uncover the stern features and learn once more a lesson which had a vexatious way of coming unlearned.

## CHAPTER VI.

### St. Patrick's Day in the Morning

"The emblems on thy shrine embossed,  
A broken head, shillelahs crossed —  
Relics of those who celebrate  
St. Patrick's Day."

ONE fine, bright March forenoon, I went into the office, when Mr. Floyd, contrary to his custom, intercepted me as I would have passed his desk.

"The boss isn't in yet," he deprecated; "and I have something to show you — something I think you will like. Sit here."

I found the "something" to be a dozen exquisite little drawings of Texas, used, as all Bushrod's drawings were, for initials, tail-pieces, and enrichments. There was Texas, standing slim-legged and round-eyed, with one paw raised, looking right out at you; the dog's head alone, with its big, clear eyes — so like a little deer's head; Texas careering through space after baseless, visionary mice.

All were most cleverly done. Bushrod had caught perfectly the personality of the little dog, and put into these tiny pictures, along with the big eyes, slim legs, and active, airy body, the fine, sensitive, affectionate dog's soul — and I said so, warmly.

"They are for a dog story that is to be run in

the weekly, sometime next month," he said. "Texas has made great friends with me. We are similarly circumstanced in some ways. We're both lonesome fellows." And after a long pause, so low I hardly caught the words, "You didn't want either of us."

I turned, laughing. It was one of Mr. Floyd's extravagant, half-sentimental jokes. But I found something, back of the smile which answered mine, that set me thinking, uncomfortably.

But there, nonsense — of course — if he hadn't said it quite so low, I should have been entirely certain it was only a joke.

I remembered with a start that I had never even read poor Bushrod's valentine, and resolved to do so as soon as I got home, that day.

A boy came and called Mr. Floyd to go across the street to the printing department. Save Mr. Corcoran deeply absorbed at his desk, there was not a soul about upon whom I had any personal claim. I sat and waited vainly for "the boss," as Bushrod called him.

Briefly, the time approached when my weekly stunt of copy should be handed in, and where it was to come from I knew not. All week I had mostly been engaged in doing those things which I ought to have left undone, when I should have been doing the things which I ought to have done; working — but at vagrant, lawless, and wholly inapplicable stuff — when I should have been asleep; loafing uneasily about when I should have been at work. And all the time beset by a horde of thoughts, recollections, images, which, though I disallowed and denied them, left me, at the end of the struggle, bankrupt of strength and spirit.



I found explanation for my silenced, disqualified condition, hopeful explanation, as reasonable as ineffectual. I told myself — what was true enough — that some of the subjects had behaved frivolously, meanly, not to say disgustingly; that I had read a pessimistic book; and that I had gone to see a play by some wretch of a Norseman — or Dutchman, or Russian — which urged upon the soul a conviction of the propriety of despair. And now I had the returns from such a week's management, in the form of a sore heart and an empty mind with which to perform the week's task.

I stood a long time at a window looking unseeingly out, thinking all this, hoping Mr. DeWitt would come in and give me some suggestion — even an order would have been meekly and gratefully accepted. My mind felt to me like a locomotive that had run into a vast mud bank.

"Texas, what are you hanging about here for at this hour?" suddenly inquired Mr. Corcoran.

I jumped. "I am not hanging about," I retorted, indignantly. "I'm waiting for —"

"You're getting low in your mind, Texas," he interrupted. "I am pained at it. Go and see the St. Patrick's Day parade — why didn't I think of it before? It is just the thing for you."

"Why for me, particularly?" I inquired, with suspicion.

"Well," rejoined Mr. Corcoran, unabashed, "if I am any judge of people and conditions, it will supply the exact elements your mental digestion demands, and for the lack of which your spirit is right now drooping."

I examined his face with guilty apprehension.

But I need not have been disquieted. He only thought me dispirited and homesick, and sought to rally me a bit.

Now he added with a genial smile: "That's right! You try it and see if it doesn't."

"It might make copy. When shall I go, and where?" said I.

"Well, they're advertised to start up Fifth Avenue at two o'clock, and they won't be comfortably and entertainingly full before four. Suppose you start about half-past two? Come down to Twenty-third Street from the house; then go out to Fifth Avenue, and you'll find it just happening right along. Oh, you'll like it — there isn't a shadow of doubt in my mind about that!"

It was plain to me he had no ulterior thoughts, and meant only to be funny. So I assumed my usual air of ignoring this intention, and went out without remark.

At the elevator I encountered Mr. DeWitt and Mr. Randolph. "Where away?" inquired my editor. The other gave me a low-spoken "Good-morning," and a look.

"St. Patrick's Day parade," I responded, briefly, and Mr. DeWitt laughed as though I had told him a joke.

"Good idea. But say — don't go off with the band and forget to come back to dinner. You know we're all dining at your house to-night," and he included the president with a glance.

I had not known it; that is, I had missed the only momentous feature of it — that Frank was coming. And now, with the disquieting knowledge suddenly thrust upon me, it was not easy to treat

Mr. DeWitt's facetious inferences with that silent and lofty superiority which it was my endeavour consistently to show toward this attitude in my associates.

This difficulty added insolence to the tone and glance with which I replied; but Mr. DeWitt laughed good-naturedly and looked significantly at Mr. Randolph, as though my impertinence were the ill-behaviour of a child "showing off" before a visitor.

At lunch, the family were unanimously interested in the St. Patrick's Day parade idea. Mrs. Corcoran inquired if the notion were mine, and interrupted herself to declare — in chorus with the others — that it was a good one, anyhow.

I caught the infection and grew much enamoured of the plan myself, expecting to get some good copy out of it.

Phyllis wanted to put a green ribbon on me. Mrs. Corcoran cried, "Oh, you must have a bouquet, so they'll think it's for Dennis, or Mike, or whoever your best man in the parade is, and everybody will make way for you everywhere."

But — by this time very much enlisted — I scorned precautions and despised counsel. And I went forth snorting, as it were, with eagerness for the fray, and in a state of puffed up complacency that was, as I saw it afterward, nothing short of an invitation for something to come and fall on me.

I came upon the parade at Fifth Avenue and Twenty-third Street; and oh, it was delightful! There would be a band playing away for dear life, and everybody marching very much in step. Gradually, things became more and more straggling,

until it was a regular go-as-you-please scramble. Then another band, everybody in step again, and so on, over and over. It — the procession — was like a string of musical beads.

Presently there was a long gap in its ranks. Upon the interval of silence there suddenly broke the blare of a trumpet, far down the avenue, backgrounded by the murmur of drums and the throbbing suggestion of marching feet. As I — and everybody else — pressed forward listening, some companies of well-drilled cadets came in sight marching solidly, the slant sun gleaming along their gun-barrels and on their shining accoutrements. Their band struck up a stirring march, the dense spiritual atmosphere which had so clogged and stifled me lifted. My breath came light and quick; my blood started off gaily; and I agreed with myself that Mr. Corcoran's idea was a good one.

What is it so taking about things military? The mere fluttering tap-tap of a gray cape, tossed back over a martial shoulder and dipping in time to the wearer's step, is snatching; the squeal of a fife, the boom-boom of the big drum, the kindling rattle of the little ones, the pulsing tread, the clinking of sabres — how inspiring! How we all stop and gaze at and admire the military dress and bearing, and listen to the martial music! Every eye brightened as the young soldiers approached, every foot kept time, responsive to the thrilling horns and rhythmic drums.

It is the urchin in all our hearts which shouts back so eagerly to this sort of thing. And the finest of us — the most evolved — who has not a touch of this boy nature, lacks something. It is the

element in us that keeps the world young and stirring, that reads border romances, gives great figures to history, art, and the stage, and furnishes them admiring audiences.

See the drum-major! He is a mood.

Old or young, big or little, plain or handsome, he is pure mood.

Look at him as he comes swelling down the street in advance of the band. Wouldn't you give all your painfully acquired pelf and pessimism, your neuralgia and notes negotiable, to feel like that for just ten minutes?

Ah, the delightful, jaunty, bumptious, extravagant mood! How elate that head, how rigid that spine, what fluent step, what lubricated prance! What rollicking abandon of happy conceit and superlative swagger!

So antic! A fool, but not a solemn fool. No, a gay, waggish fool who tips you the sly and knowing wink as he goes strutting past, as much as to say, "All fun, you know."

The excess and ecstasy of flamboyant ornamentation and martial splendour burst out all over him — nothing is gorgeous and gallant and audacious enough for this magnificent mood. The golden cords and buttons and epaulettes, the plumes, the fur, the glittering baton — these, you should know, are but symbols of the jocund soul within; the gay, powerful, merrymaker mind.

I am sorry for you if you have never known him — the drum-major. There must be something amiss with your digestion, your circulation, or your conscience.

How often has he been mine! So often that I

have come to know him well, even by name. And when I walk out in the sunshine, holding my gifts—youth, health, a modest measure of success—and feel the tingling ebullience of sheer mettle and vainglory expanding in my veins, dilating my nostrils, lifting my feet high, rolling my eyes, and thrusting out my under lip in glorious buncombe and bravado, I laugh out loud and cry, “Ho, here’s the drum-major! Hail, and thrice welcome, Sir Soldier Fool!”

This St. Patrick’s Day parade was a very glorious parade indeed; this drum-major, a being of supernatural splendour, even as drum-majors go, was alone worth the trip. There were queer wagons with two wheels, and yet queerer ones with four. There were strange hand-barrows or stretcher-like affairs carried by four resplendent creatures, upon which (the barrows or stretchers) standards were mounted, presenting to the eye, in big letters, noble sentiments, moral maxims or inflammatory doctrines. And everywhere there were flags, banners, badges, and funny hats, collars, and aprons.

Now, women dressed up, tricked out and on parade, wear always the greatest variety of smirks. No two faces will have the same degree or quality of self-consciousness or simpering complacency. But a lot of men in silk and tinsel, fringe and feathers, can always be divided into two classes,—the tickled and the sheepish.

I watched with delight the first sort strut along, rejoicing like South Sea Islanders in every one of their seven colours; glorying in every shred of tinsel and every chicken feather. And with a joy if possible finer, I observed the other sort skulk,

hang-dog, beside these (with an occasional sudden glance of desperation which suggested the desire to bolt), trying to hide their white cotton gloves under their green silk aprons; then, terrified, to hide their green silk aprons with their white cotton gloves; finally, in despair, to look nonchalant and unconcerned; in which latter they succeed so well that you would imagine a policeman waiting around the corner to take them back the minute the jamboree was over.

Well, the parade paraded, and so did the blood in my veins. Every time it (the parade) got entirely past, I went back to Sixth Avenue, got a car, rode up ahead and caught it again, all the while blessing Mr. Corcoran for his clever suggestion. And every time I caught it again it was happier, less in step, and more go-as-you-please. The parties sitting *dos à dos* on the Irish jaunting car with a green piano cover over it, hit each other upon the back of the head more vehemently and promiscuously, as they waved their flags; I began to understand what a St. Patrick's Day hat is.

Everybody laughed more. I laughed more. Then I stopped in amazement wondering to hear my own laugh. Where — when — had the heart to laugh come to me? But it was vain to ask myself, vain to decide for a more dignified demeanour. The infection was in the air, and to save my life I could not help being just as jolly as the best of them.

I accepted the sudden and grateful change in mental weather gladly, and laughed willingly with those about me. Some of the riders began to have a rotary motion on their horses, and to smile indulgently at space. I had a fine wicked sense of being

out, with a lot of wild, reckless, fellow roisterers, on a grand spree.

Suddenly, away up town, late in the afternoon, just as I was applauding the discriminating cleverness of Mr. Corcoran's suggestion for the several-hundredth time, I was fastened in a solid mass of good-humoured humanity, so dense that I couldn't wink, much less budge a foot. There I stood, becoming more and more inebriated every moment, as I inhaled gallons and gallons of condensed alcoholic vapour. "I shall be drunk and disorderly in ten minutes if this holds out. Oh, for a green ribbon — a bouquet — oh, for a cabbage leaf!" I moaned.

"Lord love yez, honey, Oi'll fix yez!" rolled out a mellow voice; a big hand plucked me through the crush, to the curbstone; everybody laughed a great deal (including me); somebody tied something on me; a bunch of disorganised flowers was put in my hand; "Take ut an' welkim," said the donor, "Oi've sivin."

Just then, in the flash of an eye there opened through the swaying crowd a clear, straight lane, and at its end I saw, facing me, Francis Garnett Randolph! He stood there in that heterogeneous rabble, immaculate, correct, making a sort of vacant place for himself in the press just by expecting it. His astonished eyes dwelt upon me for one dizzying instant. Then I turned to flee. Flight, in that press, was something like the mad rush of a fly in a glue pot. I looked out to the open space of avenue, where there came worming its way along southward one of those instruments of retribution upon an unjust generation, a Fifth Avenue stage. I waggled a fee-



ble hand at it, whereupon, to my dreamy surprise, it stopped. I entered it and started homeward. I went in a sort of nightmare. It seemed to me the passengers all looked at me queerly; but then so many things were strange that I didn't pay much attention.

We came to Fifty-ninth Street. I pulled the strap. That strap pulled, I know, locks the wheels by electricity, throttles the driver, and hamstring both horses. For when it is pulled, pull you never so gently, it stops the stage like a thunderbolt, throwing all the passengers in a heap in the forward end (I understood then why I found them there when I entered) and you underneath the pile, no matter in what part of the vehicle you are standing when the crash comes.

From the nethermost layer of this heap I crawled out and, by way of two other cars, made my way home, rang the bell, and the door opened.

I was as a sheep to the slaughter. Oh, it was written that it should be so. For I walked up-stairs and into the dining-room where the family and guests were at dinner. In the stress and imminence, as it were, of my latter adventures, and the emotions thereby induced, all other matters had escaped me. I had succeeded in so losing and neglecting the creeping hours of time, that I walked in utterly oblivious and forgetful of the fact that it was past our dinner hour, and that Mr. DeWitt, Miss Bucks — and Frank — would be dining with us.

I hope I have friends. I believe that I have gone to places to see people who have much desired my presence, and who rejoiced at my arrival. I do think this; but no welcome I had ever met in the

past could compare in spontaneity and floridity with the one my Seventy-fourth Street friends almost threw at me on the evening of this particular St. Patrick's Day. No, I was never greeted with so much enthusiasm in my life. They howled — I repeat the word — howled. I heard even Miss Bucks laugh out a strange big haw! haw! The men simply shook the roof. They all looked at each other and smote their hands together, and laughed aloud again. Never, never had I thought to see these extremely quiet and well-regulated people so lively. It was rather too much for even my long-suffering good nature.

"Maybe," I observed, "when you have done cackling and screeching, you will tell me what amuses you so."

"Texas," said my host, rising and wiping away his tears. "I'm shocked at you. I wouldn't have thought you'd do it. But I blame myself, too; for the suggestion was mine. DeWitt, we must be more careful; it won't do to let her out alone this way any more. How did you get home, Texas? Where is the policeman?"

Here Mr. DeWitt came to the surface with — "If you were only — er — in a condition to do it, what a story you could make out of yourself as a result — a product — a sort of reminiscence, a souvenir — of the parade."

I would have said that they all grinned approvingly, but I found afterward that there was one exception. "This," Mr. DeWitt went on, with a wave of the hand, which included every shameful item of my appearance, "was never brought about without several very capable causes, the history of which —"

"Illustrated by a pair of pictures of you," broke in Mr. Corcoran. "St. Patrick's Day Parade. 'Before Taking and After Taking,' see?" and he stood me up in front of a mirror.

I involuntarily looked into it. My wounded self-respect perished incontinently, my rage subsided. The utter uselessness of all explanation held me silent.

My big, furry hat sat at a rakish angle on the back of my head; the choice assortment of costly exotic poultry which decorated it was in a state of violent internecine warfare. Through the very vitals of the big black parrot was jabbed the staff of a small green flag, with a harp of Erin printed upon it in gold; while the smaller ornithological fry was scattered about, disposed in various attitudes of frightful disorder, suggestive of fierce combat and agonised death. Over my left eye was a smutch of dark colour which gave me a shamefully significant permanent wink; one side of my coat collar was up and one down; around one arm was tied a green calico banner; and in my hand was still clutched that listless and haggard bouquet.

It was too fantastic. I had to yield and join the shouts of delighted laughter; when suddenly in the midst of the joyous uproar I caught sight, in the glass — beyond that mad, disreputable caricature of me — of Francis Garnett Randolph's clear face, looking with alien eyes, pained and disapproving.

And the laugh was struck from my lips, my face burned, my eyes stung. With the shamed, hurt feeling of a petted child disporting itself for the diversion of doting friends, and suddenly confronted by a schoolmaster, "I am tired," I said, shortly.

"I'm sorry to miss you all, but I have walked something less than ninety miles since lunch time. I think I will go to bed."

And go I did, buoyed up and encouraged thereto by the sight of very genuine disappointment in that stern face.

Ever since the first outburst of laughter which greeted my appearance, the baby had been wailing, in a fitful, vagrant way, "Po' Tarry! Po' Tarry! Oh — oh — po' 'bused Tarry!"

Now, as I reached the door, he burst into such thrilling grief as secured immediate attention. I went back for my one defender — nothing less would content him.

"'Ey all mean — *mean* — to my Tarry," he mourned, as he rode out of the room on my arm. And his little wet, sobbing lips against my cheek, as he clutched me close, repeating, "I love oo — I love oo — tight — tight — tight!" gave me the one comfort we can ever receive from any human source — expressed love — the comfort which it is so usual a cruelty to withhold.

## CHAPTER VII.

### “The Eaters and the Eaten”

“Woo’t drink up eisel? Eat a crocodile?”

It was less than a week after this episode of the St. Patrick’s Day parade that, in the ardent prosecution of a new plan for obtaining “material,” I had gone through some pretty harrowing experiences at noon one day, and later, had carried some little sense of weariness and distaste — along with a sore heart — over to the park.

It was an April day, dropped into the latter part of March — bright, soft, spring-like; a half-holiday, too, and the toilers were abroad. I strolled with nurse maids and their charges, servant girls and their beaux, and working people generally, and thought of my friend Tennyson when, at Coventry, he “hung with grooms and porters on the bridge.”

As I mused, a voice spoke suddenly, close beside me. It was a voice choked and hoarse with much weeping, and glancing around I saw two — servant girls from their appearances — leaning upon the rail near me. The older and plainer, whose face was red and her eyes swollen, was the speaker.

“He treated me shameful,” she sobbed. “I give ’im the money to get the license — he didn’t have a dollar, not a dollar — an’ he’s got a license an’ married that O’Shaughnessy huzzy!”

"Ai! ai!" cried my heart. "'Tis the same theme! In words of one syllable, here. The bliss of requited affection—the pangs of misprized love! Didst think to travel far and leave it behind? To the Barcan desert, then, or those extensive woods where rolls the Oregon! For where people are, there is this chord for ever trembling. Proud and lowly, noble and simple, all are laid under tribute first or last."

"There must be," I answered, "if He who made our frame indeed is just, some compensation for these things. Poor Maria and the others will find it hereafter. 'Tis late, and I have some blocks to travel. I will e'en go home, leaving these matters to Him, and partake of that meal which my Brooklyn boarding people used sometimes to call dinner, and sometimes supper."

Rising to go, I came face to face with Francis Garnett Randolph. He put out a hand and spoke, with a little catch in his voice, as though he might have been walking fast. "It is you, then. Don't go. Sit down again. I never get a word nor a glance of yours which I can really call my own at the office."

I sat down obedient. Now was the explanation coming.

"Well," he went on, as he seated himself upon the bench beside me, "this is what I have been dreaming of for a month." He looked me over jealously. "The sight of you does my eyes good. And so, DeWitt tells me, you've been 'succeeding in journalism.'"

He spoke as though he did not see me almost daily. He intended, evidently, that those meetings should not count. Well, I certainly could think as

little of them as he seemed to! "Mr. DeWitt is all that is kind," I returned, quietly.

He lifted that aggressive chin a bit. "DeWitt is only the mouthpiece of the office, you know," he explained. "And the office is the mouthpiece of the public. You have been doing some wonderful work."

He had (who might have commanded) stooped to flatter most subtly. The mother may forget the babe; likewise the bridegroom may be taken with a failing memory, in regard to the bride. As for the monarch's affection for his crown, it's no comparison to the soft side a writing person has for commendation of his work. I melted directly, and well-nigh forgot that I had any grievance — that all this talk contained nothing germane to accepting introductions to people whom you already know.

"And so my little Western friend is a successful woman — a journalist," he went on, with a note of regret in his voice. "Tell me how the thing is done."

"Why, I just went around to queer places and then described 'em. New York is full of queer places."

"Yes, to some people. What places, for instance?" and his eyes dwelt upon my face with their intense, earnest regard.

"Well, for one thing, I thought it would be a bright idea to go and eat lunches around at snuffy-looking places where there are cards all about with such legends on them as so-and-so only ten cents; and such-and-such only twenty cents."

"But it wouldn't be bright to eat anything," interjected my listener, with a true man's horror of gastronomic experiments.

"Oh, yes," I rejoined, serenely, "to eat, of course; and to eat only these 'only' dishes. That is my notion of the way to get a practical working idea how impecunious people live."

Frank shuddered. "To think of you — with your fine, sensitive appreciation of beauty and fitness — dragging about through such places as that — to 'make copy!' "

I saw that he was genuinely distressed. "Let me tell you about it," I urged. "You can't imagine how infinitely funny it was."

"Oh, I've eaten in all sorts of places," he said, carelessly; "and gone through all those disagreeable experiences. But for a little tender flower of humanity — it makes my blood boil. There ought to be some one to take care of you, and keep you out of such hardship."

I smiled a furtive smile over the "tender flower," and after a meditative pause began, "It was poor old Mr. Macbeth, I believe, who said, when he had murdered Duncan, procured the killing of a large and varied assortment of innocent persons, and set on innumerable deeds of bloody violence, 'I have supped full with horrors!' But I am bound to think, with all deference to the man's energy and capacity, that either I have supped fuller, or my horrors were more horrible than his, or he'd never have left the sleep-walking exclusively to Mrs. Mac."

"How long have you been pursuing this extraordinary plan?" inquired Frank, suddenly, and I realised that he suspected I was hungry.

"You'd be slow to believe it," I replied, "but I have stuck to this thing three days."

Frank looked at his watch, evidently to see if we'

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were within respectable distance of any meal to which he might invite me.

"If it hadn't been so bad, I should have given it up after the first trial," I pursued; "but it was so unexpectedly dreadful that it became serious, and aroused in me the earnest enthusiasm of fight. The 'what man dare I dare' spirit entered into me."

"What were you living on all this time?" came in troubled tones from my hearer.

"Well, at the last place — about an hour ago," I answered, reminiscently, "I ordered oyster pie, 'only fifteen cents,' mackintosh — or macrame, or marabout — steak, with mushrooms, 'only twenty cents;' country sausages (I afterward decided that they had left the country for the country's good), 'only ten cents,' — and — oh, a lot of such things."

"You poor baby," murmured Frank, with a melting tenderness that was only half jesting. "Did you know how I pitied you that day on the train for your 'tea and muffin' buffet luncheon? They had broiled squirrels at that railroad hotel where I ate lunch; and I was greatly minded to wrap one in a napkin and take it to you. When I got back and saw you with that bowl of deadly tea before you I was sorry I hadn't."

I sighed as I thought of that comparatively drinkable fluid. "This tea that I got with my lunches here was awful indeed," I returned. "It offered mingled suggestions of all the camomile, sassafras, and catnip decoctions of my infant years, but it always had the added blandness of dishwater to soften it and make it palatable."

"And yet you always ordered it," hazarded Frank. "You know my comment that day. A

lady will always order tea. It's one of her articles of faith that a cup of tea is the proper thing. She'd generally as soon break one of the commandments as omit it."

"Well, I tried the cocoa and chocolate," I admitted, "but I was afraid of them. They sat and looked at me after I had ordered them, until I gave it up and went away. If all the things could be in the tea that seemed to be there, what villainy might not lie *perdu* under those opaque, mulatto countenances? What crime, madness, and death might not lurk in those mysterious and unfathomable depths?"

"And all this time what were you eating?" inquired Frank, rather sternly. "I remember those places with their artificial stone gingerbread that stays on the table all the time. Yes, I know" — as I would have interrupted him — "and a curious interesting petrification, which they call cake, sitting beside the Portland cement cookies — but what did you *eat*?"

"Never mind the eating," I said. "Let's talk about what I couldn't eat. Oh, you should have seen the oyster that was the wicked genius of that oyster pie! He sat on top, surrounded by pale, startled gravy (below deck were things unspeakable). His viciousness was the repulsive depravity of the old. He lacked whatever excuse is offered by youth and inexperience. He was tough, he was dissolute, incorrigible, invulnerable! He was not to be penetrated by kindness, nor by any of the utensils furnished. I felt it an injury to my moral nature ever to have known him; and I asked the waiter timidly to take him away, and bring me one of

those enormous wedges of pumpkin pie, 'only five cents.'"

"I thought you never ate pie?" said Frank, quickly. He had a curious way of finding out and treasuring up all one's little personal peculiarities. When he was sweet, one was sure he did it for love, and when — well — at other times, one supposed that he was keeping reprehending account of one's faults.

"No," I agreed, "I never eat pie; but I understood that it was the mainest dish with the folks I was investigating, so pie it must be."

"Just over here is a nice place," began Frank — "you must be hungry if you lunched on a piece of pie."

"No, no, hear me out," I protested. "It is a humiliating record for one who has been glad to share the hospitality of the fortuitous cow-camp or the chance-met chuck-wagon, all through the West Texas cattle country, and it runneth thus: The tea was the one thing I really disposed of; between me and the country sausage it was a draw; also with the macadam steak and the fireproof mushrooms it was about an even thing. The depraved and disreputable oyster loafing on the hurricane deck of the pie named for him — well, he routed me after a desperate struggle. The cocoa and chocolate stood me off; they slew me by the look, like cockatrices. And before the size and solid resistance of those vast wedges of pie, I simply melted away and drifted out into the street."

"And so," laughed Frank, "if starvation has brought you to terms, you —"

"No, it wasn't starvation," I interrupted, "if you

will believe me, it was neither the things I ate nor those I couldn't eat that have humbled my proud heart, and broken and trampled upon my free spirit. It was the harshness of the waiters."

"What?" inquired Frank, with startling suddenness.

"Oh, yes," I pursued, calmly, "these men were positively unkind — they were brutal."

"They were brutal to you?" echoed Frank. "Do you really mean that?"

"Of course I mean it. The last one was the worst. He came along the moment I was seated, thrust the inflexible and serrated corner of a malarial-looking napkin into my near eye, and while I was wiping away the tears I could not hide, bawled out in a loud, insulting tone, 'Y' go'n' t' order?' He suggested fried oysters, and a thing with a French name that sounded, as he pronounced it, very profane, and made the lady across from me jump; though now that I think of it, he had just introduced the napkin corner into her eye."

"I want you to promise me," began Frank, "that you will not go alone any more to such places. I must be allowed to go with you and look after you."

"Nice copy I should get in that way! Why, any of them would be afraid of you, and wouldn't do a thing worth repeating. Now this one sneered at every 'only' dish I ordered in a way that would have made Pooh Bah seem a jolly, harum-scarum democratic dog. I never saw such sneering in my life. Honestly, it was like some sort of professional or artistic work. I think I may say he snorted. He treated everybody else with the same savage contempt, and not a soul ventured to so much as look a protest."

"Even a waiter in a cheap restaurant ought to know a lady. He should have had a lesson for classing you with the people he abuses daily."

"I was afraid to explain that I was 'there for a purpose,' and endured his contumely in silence. He resented my not talking more, and giving him opportunity to vent sarcasms upon me (he could not understand it; wasn't I a woman?), and the last thing he did was — under cover of his office — to skilfully jerk the chair from beneath me, just before I rose."

"This is past a joke," remonstrated Frank. "I want your promise. You see, don't you? that you need me to take care of you."

"No, I think I managed admirably," I returned. "I haven't ridden Texas ponies, and walked, and ran, and climbed, and rowed, and swam, and chased bears and cats (reversed order, you know) for nothing. I was too quick for him. I got up like the price of eggs near Christmas. He went back with the disencumbered chair in his hand, into a very fluid dinner that was being brought in to a very fat old man ahead of me. It consisted of a big bowl of hot soup, and a big glass of cold beer; and while he stood, blind and helpless for one moment, with these beverages running off every projection, I said, feeling coarse and low and common all over (three days of this would do for you, too), 'I guess not,' and then walked out."

Frank rose, and fixed his laughing eyes on me. "Are you done?" he inquired.

"Why, yes," I responded, somewhat taken aback, "that's all."

"Well, let me inform you that I don't believe one

word of it. Let's see how right I am. Over in a pretty room in the corner of that tall building the Seven Black Slaves wait to spread the feast — for you and me. Now, Mademoiselle Scheherezade, if (as I have said) this was a tale invented to entertain — and torment — me, you will refuse, in your calm way, to go and share the banquet. But if this harrowing recital was really a true one, starvation will drive you to say yes — which is it?" And he stood studying my countenance with what seemed to me a disproportionately intense scrutiny and challenge.

"Well," I returned, slowly, "the tale is all true — just a plain, honest report. Also, I am hungry, and" — I hesitated, glanced up again at his smiling face, then finished — "and I think it would be lovely to run away and dine with you. But it is also true that the Corcorans have invited civilised persons to come and see me at dinner. I am It, to-night. It lies upon me to be there."

We walked out to Seventy-fourth Street. I thought he would have left me, for one of the downtown lines — his apartments were, I knew, in Irving Place, at Gramercy Park — but he walked with me to our door.

As we stood lingering a moment, quite isolated, in the vestibule, he said, suddenly, "People?"

I glanced about blankly an instant; then remembrance enlightened me. "To dinner this evening, you mean?" I returned. "Well, the vague and stately toga drapes a single personality."

I found it surprising that any feeling could have put this man so far from his ordinary as to allow him the expression of curiosity in such a connection. Then I glanced up. Frank's face was flushed, the



fine nostril trembled; I saw, beneath his moustache, the lower lip caught hard between the white teeth.

It came to me — as it always does to a woman at this point — to assure him promptly that the expected guest was not a man. We do so long to give the sugar-plums to the loved child naughty enough to demand — to even storm for them.

But before I could frame the words, he had recovered himself. He raised his hat, saying, "I must not be inconsiderate — I have already detained you — and you must dress."

I put out my hand, which he took, and clasped and held it warmly, and then was gone.

## CHAPTER VIII.

### Of the Making of Books

"But this you must know, that as long as they grow,  
Whatever change may be,  
You can never teach either oak or beech  
To be aught but a greenwood tree."

AFTER this there were two formal calls from Mr. Francis Garnett Randolph. To the eye of the casual observer his visit would, in each instance, have appeared to be addressed to the entire household — prominently including Teddy, for Frank was as successful with children as with the pure line. But the household assured me that he had called upon them but once a year before my advent, and warmly urged me to regard the honour of his present social activity in this direction as a legitimate offering at the shrine of my attractions.

Twice only, during the two evenings, did we fall into anything like personal conversation. Mr. and Mrs. Corcoran were engaged in searching for a new book at one time, and had responded to some call of Teddy's at another; so that for a moment we two sat upon one side of the room, while our lovers (by which convenient term I designate Phyllis and her beau) occupied the other. There was very little said, each time, that all the parlour full might not have heard, except that he promptly alluded to our



former meeting, which I then remembered he had never done in the presence of the others.

"Are you liking it here?" he asked me. "Are you homesick?"

"Never!" I returned, stoutly.

"You know — do you? — that I think you ought to be at home," he went on. "A woman like you should be tenderly cared for, and find her happiness in making sunshine for others."

"I have rather a hankering for sunshine myself," I observed, disrespectfully.

"And you think, like Diogenes — do you? — that a man is a thing which keeps off the sunlight."

"Who was talking about a man?" I asked.

"I was," he answered, briefly, and turned to receive the book Mr. Corcoran had brought in.

The second time that we spoke together, without the assistance of the others, he expressed a desire for another good, long talk with me. "I am a reserved man," he said. "By choice I am a listener rather than a talker."

"An uncomplimentary way of explaining your liking for conversation with me," I laughed.

"Oh, no," he objected. "It is not the explanation at all. I am as garrulous as an old gossip with you. If I am ever silent when we are together — if you find me a silent person, that is — it is not for the same reason that other people do. With the world at large, I either lack ideas in common, or I am disinclined to expose my opinions to others. With you, I am sometimes held silent by the fear that I cannot make you see things as I do."

He leaned a little toward me, with the remembered bend of the head, and lowered his voice to

those tones of irresistible sweetness — those tones so unreasonably moving and pleading. Even in the moment of it, I thought angrily that if he had but leaned toward me so, looked at me with such eyes and spoken in those tones, he might have said “twice two are four,” all would have been one to me; my treacherous heart would have flown to open the door to the eyes and the voice, regardless of what the voice said. With a movement, a glance, a tone, he had thrust away all the time since our first meeting, all my resentment and pain. With the changeful eyes fixed on mine, and the voice at its most caressing tone, he said:

“When I look at you, my heart is so eager, my mind so full of things I want to show you — to make you see — and I so fear and tremble lest I be misunderstood, that I am sure it often precipitates the very event I dread. When you speak to me — reply to me — I perceive that it is so. But to be silent — to — to withdraw — pray understand me — help me — I mean to assure you that I realise how a negative course may be more distasteful, more wounding to you than — than almost anything else.”

I saw his trouble. It came upon me like a flash of illumination that his position, to a man of such pride — such arrogant pride and self-will — so tied up in prejudice and conservatism and preconceived ideas of how things ought to be, and with all the determination to make them be that way, if they had the bad taste not to do it themselves — to such a man, Frank’s position toward me — a position into which he had been dragged, like myself, by a mere cloudburst of ungovernable emotion — was certainly trying. Also, he was the man; it was he

who must take any initiative; all — all — was expected of him — who knew not his own heart, his intentions or wishes in the matter. And he might wound me by too great deliberation, or offend me by assuming too much.

I turned to him, smiling, and said, "I see — I understand. And we have gotten the cart so before the horse, that now it is pretty hard to straighten things out, or do anything naturally or simply. We've focussed a microscope on anything we may say or do now, haven't we? — given a frightful size and significance to it?"

Frank's face had looked relieved, glad, then a trifle uneasy. Now he broke in, "Oh, you mustn't think for a moment —"

"Wait!" I interrupted, in turn. "I have it now. Do you like me? Do you believe you would find interest in me, just as in other companionable people to whom you are attracted?"

"Oh, you *know* —" he began, with low-voiced vehemence, but I went on.

"Well, then, why can we not give ourselves a reasonable chance? Why not take away the microscope, and begin again like rational people who see in each other a possible valued friend, and —"

Here Teddy came swarming up Mr. Randolph, and over this frizzly head I received a glance and smile of comprehension, answer, and assurance.

It was during this call of his that I had told Frank I did much of my work forenoons in the Astor library. I was writing a little story of the Georgia coast and the sea islands, in 1740, just after the settlement there by Oglethorpe. The morning after, I was in the library, deep in a collection of pamphlets

— quaint old things printed with spidery type and long ss — letters, reports, and diaries of Wesley, Whitefield, and of Oglethorpe himself. They illuminated the points of my story, and I was eagerly absorbed in them, when a voice said to me, in a murmur just above a whisper — and it reverberated along the remotest confines of consciousness like a trumpet — “Good morning!”

As though that voice had called it there, the blood rushed to my face. I smiled, and whispered back, “Good morning.”

Then he offered me explanations so voluble and elaborate of his presence there at that hour that I finally stopped him.

“You know there would be no actual affront in it,” I said, mildly, “if you had come with the hope of seeing me.”

He looked offended, and I saw he was in one of what I called his Grand Lama moods. Then he glanced again at me, his face changed, with that quick, lovely change I knew so well, he rose, and murmuring, “Come out here where we can talk,” drew me with a sort of gentle imperiousness to a remote and ill-lighted alcove.

When we were seated, he began, looking me over narrowly and jealously, “I will not be offended; you shall not offend me. You are irritable because you are unhappy. I warned you this life would not suit you.”

“Go right ahead and forgive me — do!” I urged. “It would be the last straw.”

But he only shook his head and smiled. “I have a purpose,” he said, “and I am not to be turned from it. Please be sweet and reasonable.”

"I will," I agreed, every fibre of my being relaxing beneath the tone, the smile, and the kind bearing.

"That is good," he said, and again smiled. "I want to talk to you seriously, may I?" and he seated himself in front of me.

"That sounds rather ominous," I hesitated. "Don't people always say that when something very unpleasant is coming?"

"No, no," he reassured. "It is about your work. You —"

I half rose, startled, my face burning now painfully, my mind suddenly flooded with vague, galling surmise.

"The work!" I cried. "It — it — doesn't it — does Mr. DeWitt —"

"Oh, pray pardon me!" he urged eagerly, taking my hands, and pushing me gently back into my chair. "You must not be hasty; let me finish. What I wished to say is that you are doing brilliant, magnificent work now — but can you keep it up? Are you not wearing yourself out — working out your vein? It is of you I am thinking, not of DeWitt nor the office. Your work is only too good for such ephemeral uses. And isn't it costing you too much?"

There was Frank. I was an irresponsible creature, unable to take care of myself. "Oh, no," I said, "you know I adore work. I glory in it. It does me good always. It makes me happy — it makes me well — when nothing else can."

"And you think I am jealous of your work?" (I had not said so.) "Well, perhaps I am. I am of a jealous disposition, and it comes out where I

feel strongly. But maybe you need the work to keep your mind from getting restless; only — it — ought to be under somebody's guidance."

"Why?" I asked, with rising resentment. "Why should my work be planned by another, any more than yours? — and you know you wouldn't stand it a minute."

"I do not mean in the planning or conception of the work. Your own genius is your best guide there. But in everything else, you need a —"

"I need a boss, do I?" I retorted. "Well, I haven't found one yet."

Mr Francis Garnett Randolph hated to hear a "lady" use slang. Its use, with many other privileges, was reserved in his mind for the stronger half of creation. He flinched now at the word "boss."

"You need to love and to be loved deeply," he said, after a long pause, in the fullest tones of that great, wooing voice, and bending upon me a look of sudden tenderness. "It is in loving that a true woman's strength lies." The heart within me — the weak, foolish heart — sprang to answer him. But I knew better. I shrank back from the lure of tone and glance, and put up the protesting hand of an accusation, with —

"Nobody but you calls me weak!"

"Nor do I call you so. You are restless, unsatisfied; and you always will be so till your heart finds peace," he answered, gravely, and with the undiminished sweetness that so daunted me. When Frank chose to be sweet, he was to me terrible as an army with banners.

Put to my utmost defence, "Please," I said, peevishly, "let's talk of something sensible."

Frank's haughty spirit was up in arms instantly. "I came to talk of something sensible this morning," he began.

"Oh, you did come to see me, then?" I observed.

"I did. I want to discuss a plan for a book. The house is getting out two; one dealing with the Eastern part of the country, the other with California and the far West. I think there should be a third, exploiting what we are in the habit of calling the Middle West — the centre."

"Yes," I assented, vaguely. It was all Greek to me.

"We have contracted with first-class people for these Eastern and Western books. And now this Middle West volume — there is nobody I know who could do that so well as yourself."

"Oh!" I groaned. "A whole great big book! I should hate the thought of it. I should loathe it. I should feel like a slave chained to an oar in a galley."

But this man could be obtuse, or even forgiving, when he had a point to make. "It would suit your style exactly," he went on. "I have planned a hundred pictures for it. Rouse, Bushrod Floyd, and Max Ulrich are to illustrate the other two books; but I am deeply interested in this one. I want you to see my sketches for the pictures."

I groaned again. He had not made a book illustration for years. His pictures for that purpose were simply not to be had. This enormous condescension on his part was portentous.

I began at the wrong end of things, with, "I should make a mess of it. The very thought that there was a whole book to be written, and that it had

to be written in a certain way, would make me frantic to write it some other way — or to put it all into a storiette — an item. You surely know, by this time, that a barrier — a fence — just presents itself to me as something to be gone over, and gone over quick.”

I saw in his face that he considered this unfeminine, unwomanly, undesirable. “You do yourself injustice,” he declared. “I am sure you are one of the most versatile creatures I have ever seen. You can do anything you want to do.”

I longed to say frankly that I did not want to do this thing; but somehow my tongue was tied. Already that domineering spirit of his, which held in reserve so much sweetness and tenderness, ruled me utterly; or rather, it ruled me when I was with him.

“Take a little time to think about it,” he urged. “I have been over that ground just recently. That is what I was about when I found you,” and his eyes dwelt upon me for a disturbing instant. “Of course I am not a writer. I should only presume to offer my suggestions as a help. You know what I think of your work. You know what they all think at the office. I do not feel that I dare touch it; but whatever facts I can give you are at your service.”

For some reason, this explanation alleviated the prospect considerably. “You’d take some of the responsibility, would you?” I inquired.

“I should be glad to take it all,” he answered, promptly. “You’ll do the thing magnificently. I shall be proud to have my pictures associated with your text.”



This was, as Mr. Weller would have said, "Comin' it werry strong."

"I have a little studio," he went on. "It is the room I took when I first came to New York. I went through some pretty tight places in that little studio, and my good fortune found me there. I do my work now, of course, mostly at the office, but I have never been able to give up the room. It stands, little changed from what it was three years ago. Once in awhile it is used by some of the others, for some special work. When we have an artist here from a distance doing something for us, we put him — or her — there. It is really mine. I do what very rare occasional illustrating I do there. But it has come to be a sort of community possession at the office. I have been making these illustrations for your book down there. I wish you would come with me and see it."

The words, "Your book," rather took my breath away. They seemed to fasten the chains on me. "Oh, please do not be so sure I shall write it," I pleaded. "You will be so much the angrier when I do not."

As usual, I had offended when I meant to avert a quarrel. He turned his head away, and looked out of the window. "I have an unfortunate temper," he said, finally, in that tone which means "I haven't any temper at all; I am a martyred angel, and it is you who are hard to get along with."

"Think it over," he repeated. "You could bring your manuscript there, and work to the pictures, as I also could get illustrative ideas from your text. The long hours passed so together would be bits of

heaven to me, — but perhaps you would rather have DeWitt's directions."

It was unkindly said. He sat looking from the window, with that impatient face I had learned to know too well. The human heart is a wayward thing. It was exactly true, as he had said, that, so far as any work was concerned, I greatly preferred to be under Mr. DeWitt's guidance. I was happier so. But dared I say it? Not for worlds! My days had already begun to be good days or bad days according to whether I saw Frank or not. They were further divided into days of misery or seasons of delight according as I succeeded in pleasing him or not.

A sudden conception of what it would be to sit for long, delightful hours beside him, both busy, silent or speaking, just as we chose, clutched at my heart. I would do it — of course I would! What a small matter it was, after all, to please him in this. He thought he was helping me; he meant to be kind. I could certainly do no less than meet him half-way. And yet, as I said "Yes," a vision of the heavy, unlovely task before me, an appreciation of the blind egotism which had thrust such a task upon me, robbed the conclusion of any happiness.

Frank was elated, boyishly gay, overflowing with tenderness. "The little studio has several keys, my beloved partner," he said, producing one and putting it in my hand. "The janitor could always open it for you, but I will give you this, so that if you want to go there when I am out of town, or should come first to an appointment, you will feel like an independent proprietor. I must tell you

that it will be eminently correct, every way. Miss Salem (our heaviest stockholder, you know; daughter of the house's founder) once had Miss Bucks, and afterward that wonderful Mrs. Parmalee, doing some series of articles there for the service — under my direction; and she put in, for their use in the work, a quantity of precious old files of Salem's magazine in priceless cases. And she herself uses the little studio sometimes. This makes it feasible for you — as it will be heavenly for me."

"Yes?" I returned, smiling a little at his carefulness. "I hadn't even thought of this question."

"Besides," he went on, gaily, "there will be the immediate chaperonage of Lemuel, to whom it shall be my pleasure to present you. He is an accomplished chaperon, but he is yet finer as undiluted literary material. And he shall be yours in both capacities."

## CHAPTER IX.

### The Little Studio

"Where name of slave and sultan is forgot,  
And peace to Mahmoud on his golden throne."

THE little studio had evidently been swept and garnished for my coming. Upon the table, in a long-stemmed, water-green vase, was one half-opened blush rose. Frank explained that he put it there as a portrait of me.

The janitor came in and out on errands; the door was set wide, and tenants of the studios across or beyond or beside stopped now and again to fling in a jest or a welcome. They took me, as I bent above my work, for a fellow artist or sitter, and usually included me genially in their remarks.

It was the pleasant coast of Bohemia; the land breeze greeted us sweetly.

I have mentioned the janitor, but in doing so I have placed his more inconsiderable entitlement first; whereas he was Lemuel first, and a janitor afterward. Lemuel was lacking in the matter of an eye; yet, with the one optic which accident had spared, he saw more deeply into the affairs of the pair who had taken to work in the little studio than any of the two-eyed persons about.

Frank sat at his drawing-board, I at a table within reach of his hand. Though we seemed in

such easy association with the people who came or went, they had affairs and concerns of their own, and, as a matter of fact, they for the most part regarded us not. We were spiritually as much alone together as though we were indeed upon the desert island of which Frank had talked, that day on the train.

In spite of the loathed work under my fingers, I was breathing the air of paradise — that is to say, the atmosphere of glamour. I looked at the people passing the door, and pitied them. They could not sit by Frank and talk to him, and have him listen in that wonderful way, with the ineffable bend of his head, the lovely softening of those stern gray eyes. Poor people! I hoped Heaven would give them something else — not as good, that could not be, but something which, in their happy ignorance, they might think as good.

Lemuel, dusting from chair legs imaginary specks, in the hope of gratuities which should be more substantial, noted that we spoke little, and bestirred himself for our entertainment.

“Mebby you would think, now, that I hain’t never went with the gals none?” said he, selecting with good judgment a subject in which he plainly supposed us both to be interested. “I reckon, ez a fac’, I’ve went with more gals in my time ’n ary un-lame, two-eyed feller you could p’int out. Mebby ye pay ’tention to me bein’ lame, an’ one-eyed, an’ a little wizzled-up ol’ crowl? Huh! them things ain’t nothin’. It’s a way ’at counts with gals — a way — an’ ” (with a look of abandoned wickedness) “I’m the feller ’t’s got it!”

When Lemuel was gone to other studios and

other chair legs, "How are you getting on?" inquired Frank, and I suddenly became aware that I was sitting dreaming, chin on hand, my pencil untouched.

"Excellently!" I answered, with alacrity.

"Maybe you would rather have pen and ink? I think all manuscripts should be made in ink."

Now, I can never produce copy except with a pencil, and a pencil of one particular make and brand, at that. But I answered, airily, "Oh, I could write with a burnt stick."

"Does it bother you, having me here in the room?"

When I really have an inspiration I am apt to double-lock the doors and pull furniture against them, to come as near being sole alone in the world as possible. While the fine frenzy is on me, I do not like to remember that any one else exists. But at this threat of withdrawing the only alleviation of my present hard lot, I panicked promptly.

"I could not write at all if you were not there with suggestions and plans," I asserted; and he reached over and patted the hand which held the pencil.

"We are doing famously, are we not, little partner?" he murmured; and for fifteen minutes I wrote furiously about the Middle West, things the maddest ever penned — or pencilled.

At the end of that time Frank rose and came over to look at my work, as I supposed. I hate having an incomplete production seen at all; but this was all such utter bosh that I was especially unwilling. I laid my hand over the sheets, but he bent down smilingly to take my pencil and put it in order.

"How do you like DeWitt?" he inquired, casually.

My happy heart was full of love for all living creatures. "Oh, he has been everything to me in my work," I expanded. "So patient with my blunders —"

"Patient with your blunders!" repeated Frank, then laughed. "That is noble, indeed, of him. Why, you could set Justin DeWitt up in brains a dozen times over."

"I could no more do the work he does," I demurred, "than I could write tragedies. He is so satisfactory, so consistent, so exact, so wonderfully clever."

There was a pause. My pencil had been mended some time. Now it was laid down upon the table with decision. "I am not jealous of DeWitt, you understand," Frank announced, authoritatively. "I could not be jealous of any one — in the ordinary sense of the word. I envy him the opportunity he has of being constantly with you. That is all."

I opened my eyes very wide indeed. "Constantly with me!" I cried. "Why, I don't see him for a week at a time, and then only when he gives me his helpful suggestions and ideas."

I reflected afterward that this was the information Frank wanted, and that it pleased him. At the time, his attitude was so nearly one of dignified reproof that this seemed hardly possible.

"Well, then," he amended, "I envy him the opportunity of helping you in your work. Or more properly, I grudge him your belief that his suggestions are helpful — for I am not sure that you wouldn't be better off without his attempts at guidance."

From that first day on, work upon the big book, which Frank had tentatively christened "The Heart of Our Country," became a part of my daily living. With each meeting I cheated myself into a transient content; but the whole matter was, after all, a source of suffering. Stevenson, in his "Weir of Hermiton," speaks of the schoolmaster that there is in all men. Frank surely had more than his share. Or perhaps I err; I am inclined to think sometimes that it was owing to the strong and unwelcome feeling which had possessed both of us since our first meeting, that he showed to me so frequently this unlovable trait. Yet there were days, moods, when he was sweetness itself.

We had got pretty well started in our work; I had begun to confess reluctantly that I could, though I detested it, do, and do well, this writing which Frank wanted of me, when I ran up to the studio one morning to capture and confine with pencil and paper a brilliant idea I had for the book.

I had no reason to suppose that Frank would be there, indeed, I believed him out of town; so that when I found the door ajar, pushed it open and went in, the meeting which ensued was a glad surprise to us both.

He was at work at his illustrations. Frank was always a very slow and painstaking worker. Lemuel, brush and pan in hand, was holding forth to him upon that one subject whereon he professed to be an authority.

"'F ye're a-goin' with gals, go with two," pronounced Lemuel, sententiously.

"Always?" inquired Frank.

"Yuzzer," maintained Lemuel. "Fer why? see



the wisdom of it. 'F one o' the gals gits smart, w'y, there's t'other. They sorter wambles along, an' keeps each other up to taw, 'thout you a-worryin' about it."

"Competition," remarked Frank.

"Yaas, likely; somethin' o' that kind, I guess," agreed Lemuel, vaguely, as he bobbed me one of his absurd salutations and drifted away.

Grown suddenly industrious, I went at once to my table, and resisted all overtures to conversation till I had finished my writing. Through with it, I sat and mused a bit. After all, it would be a delightful thing to have some one to sit in the room and work when you were working, some one to read things to when you had finished them and thought they were good, to discuss plans with when you were just beginning to sketch out a piece of work.

I knew — who so well? — how perfectly Frank could be all that, and reflected with a sort of grieved indignation how far he was from being it. I might not sit beside him, happy in my own work, in which I delighted. No, it must be something that he had planned, some task he had laid upon me. The very work under my fingers, I dared not show to him, nor read to him; for — oh, wayward me! — I had failed to set down the brilliant idea for the book. It had somehow evaporated, and I had written in its stead a bit of verse. Worst of all, it was verse expressing a rebellious mood, which at the time possessed me, toward this tyranny of affection.

I raised my head with a start, and found my partner's eyes fixed upon me. Lemuel, still plying pan and brush outside the studio door, was singing as he worked.



Lemuel, though gey auld and wrinkled and blind of one eye, is frequently moved to song, when he voices his sentiments in a thin, wavering falsetto. For the gods still smile upon Lemuel, and the youngest and least responsible of them now counselled him to pipe :

“ Oh, I love my love an’ my love loves me —  
They never was hearts was fonder !  
An’ I’ll jist ketch a-holt of my trew love’s hand,  
An’ through this world we’ll wander.”

“ Let’s take a holiday,” proposèd Frank. “ and run away together. I want to go back to that day on the train.”

“ ‘ The moving Finger writes ; and, having writ,  
Moves on ; nor all your Piety and Wit  
Shall lure it back to cancel half a Line,  
Nor all your tears wash out a word of it.’ ”

I quoted. “ You had that marked big and black in your Rubáiyát, as one of your Eternal Truths.”

“ Well, it is not true any more,” retorted Frank, easily. “ I am going to cancel the opinion you formed of me that day. I freely confess that I had not self-possession to be natural. I felt toward you as I had never felt — never, toward any one — before. I was afraid to let you see it, and in concealing it I concealed the real man as well.”

“ Oh, did you ? ” I jeered. “ Well, it is my opinion that I saw through you that first fifteen minutes, just as I’ve been doing ever since.”

“ You do not understand me at all,” said Frank, with a serious face. “ I long since realised the

futility of trying to express in words most of the things which are really worth expression."

"But I judge you by the things you *do*," I answered, with determined lightness.

"I so long," he continued, "to give you my ideas as they seem to me before I clothe them in words. I fear always that I seem to you abrupt, stern, strange; not kindred to you as you to me. After I am gone from you — when we are apart — this fear becomes a reality in regret. You must remember I have not your gift of eloquence. If I had, I should try to tell you — to give you just half an idea — how moved I was by that first meeting with you, and how mad and irrational the feeling then seemed to me."

"To you!" I echoed, aghast.

"Yes, to me," he maintained. "But on your account as well as my own. I have always thought first for your happiness."

"And your own pride," I added.

"No. You do not do me justice — you never do me justice. I saw you were carried away somewhat in the same mad fashion that I myself was — oh, I did. It is too late to mince matters and choose words. If I cared, you did, too. I saw that you were distressed and unsettled — that you distrusted it —"

"As you did," I cut in.

"Yes, as I did. Let it stand so, if you will. I determined there and then to draw back — to be whatever you wanted me to — your very good friend, — and — and — but to offer no love till it could be offered with calmness and ac — replied to with calmness. It was fair to neither of us to do more."

I stood at the table, turning over drawings which I could not see. "You are kindness itself," I uttered, finally; but my tone robbed the words of grace.

"I have been kinder to both of us than you will admit."

"Well," I asked, finally, in a choking tone, "what is all this you are coming to?"

"When I found that I loved you, Cara — sudden, ill-founded as the sentiment might appear — I did not need any sophistry to sustain my self-respect. I have always held the conventionalities lightly, if not in contempt. The feeling itself was one of which I could be proud. My restraint came from a sort of fear of the power of the thing which ruled me. That I should rush at you with an avowal for which you were not prepared, was a thing I could not brook. No, no, Carita — dearest — let me be honest with you; that I should be swept into a position for which *I* was not ready, was the thing which angered me. My frankness may cost me your love, yet must I say it. I resented this being possessed by an emotion stronger than my will. I have gloried in my self-control, I have held pride not only in the mastery of my own emotions, but in my ability to rule others, and I would not be mastered. So I ran away."

This was true — all true. I had known it always, nor blamed him for anything in it. What I did blame him for, what I must feel an offence, was the blind, stupid egotism that permitted him to say it to me here, now.

My head came up, the tears of feeling dried in my eyes. "You certainly need not run away from

me," I said, gathering up my possessions with unsteady fingers, and preparing to depart.

Frank came over, smiling, took the things out of my hands, holding both of them in his firm, masterful grasp. "There, now, the queen is angry," he said. "Do you know, dearest, I am always somewhat afraid of you. You are such a little bundle of dynamite. It is new to me — and not altogether comfortable — to be so timid. I turn every sentence of yours over and over in my halting mind till I have derived as many meanings from it as a disputatious churchman could get out of the Apostles' Creed. And meantime you are away — offended — hatching up accusations against me."

"You!" I cried, a little wildly. "Any one as cold and hard as you are! You don't care whom you hurt, nor how much."

"How dare you say I am cold?" he asked, quickly, with a touch of the old sternness, raising my face and looking into my unwilling eyes. "How dare you hint that I would intentionally wound you? I have tried always to think of you first — to consider what was best for you in this."

I longed inexpressibly to say that the possession of my own soul, the courage to assert that it was my own, was certainly what was best for me. But speech of any sort would not come.

"You are as free as air, my love," he said, gently relinquishing my hand, and dropping to the deep tones that were so irresistible to me. "Cara, you are the brightest spirit, the sunniest, truest, bravest soul I have ever known. You are the sweetest influence, dear, that has ever come into my life. And you have the loveliest eyes, the loveliest smile, the

most adorable presence a woman ever had. Would I want you — would I love and wish to keep you for my own? I do love you and want you with all my heart and soul and strength. But I would not lay a finger upon your will. You must come to me of your own motion, if you come at all."

I was aware, I know not how, that this was not an assurance of generous devotion, but the demand of selfishness. Something in me understood that it meant not only, "I desire your love," but, "I desire that you should offer it to me." And somewhere, somewhere, back in my fond soul, I found courage to resist it.

Though my throat shut on the thing I tried to say, Frank caught the words, "a selfish demand." He instantly drew back a little, in amazement, protesting:

"I am not selfish; I am not demanding. Ask those nearest me."

"Oh, yes, I know," I answered, finding my voice again. "The people who belong to you, the people who surrender their wills and their lives to you — you are very kind to them. It is the presumption of equality in any one you love that you will not tolerate."

"Cara!" he cried, with deep reproach. "If you loved me — no, I will not say that — you do love me; if you were willing to admit it — you would not bring up so absurd a thing as the question of equality. You know how far above me I hold you."

I looked at him with swimming eyes. "Yes, I love you — and I am willing to love you," I sobbed, "if I could do so and not be rent — distracted — destroyed by it." When the words were out, I

saw the offence they contained, and trembled. To my great relief, Frank took them somewhat humourously.

"Who told you you were to be rent, distracted, and destroyed? I think you must be already a little distracted, and deserve to be destroyed," he said, with the indulgent laugh of one who gently rallies an overwrought child.

And so a truce was patched between us, but a truce which left my heart sore. The thought of life with Frank came to me after that just as my mood was, either a vision of rapture, an outlook of perfect bliss, utter content; or, when the mood was a black one, a long vista of dreary self-restraint, self-condemnation, scarred and seared by the marks of impotent outbreaks, upheavals, and explosions, growing gradually feebler and more infrequent, till they ended in the dead level of complete relinquishment.

It had power to wake me in the night with an icy finger laid upon my heart, and a whisper, "To this favour you will come — aye, for all your fine words and your prating about liberty and self-expression, there will come a time when his love will count highest, and you will sell for it your birth-right."

I said to myself, when I was utterly wearied out with the conflict, "Yes, I will, and I shall find peace. Just to lay my head on Frank's breast and give it all up, let him think for me, decide for me, live my life for me — that would be all; then the conflict would be over. I should be at rest."

And I remembered, with a start, that these are the words we choose in which to speak of the dead, and added, half whimsically, half sadly,

“ Well, I shall be dead then. It is a moral death — a spiritual death.”

And yet, not being quite ready for the spiritual sexton to shovel me under, I sought for something to serve as a temporary stay of proceedings.

To get away — that was it — away where I could think clearly, where my mental machinery would not be unbalanced by the presence of the powerful magnet of Frank’s will; to get some perspective upon this matter that now filled my whole field of vision. And I resolved to find an opportunity to do this — or to make one.



## CHAPTER X.

### “His Proper Gift”

“If we impinge never so slightly upon the life of a fellow mortal, the touch of our personality, like the ripple of a stone cast into a pond, widens and widens across the æons, till the far-off gods themselves cannot say where action ceases.

“This man had chosen to thrust an inexperienced finger into the workings of another’s life.”

WE had actually schemed the big book, the senior partner in the undertaking going ahead and doing most of the work, to encourage me, as one holds out a hand a pace or two in advance of the child who is learning to walk.

I had never imagined that anything in the way of writing could be such misery to me as was the production of those first chapters. All my gifts (and I am not modest about possessing a few) were thrown away upon this heavy, statistical work. It was going to be the kind of a book which you can respect, but surely not the sort that any one could love; and if I cannot love my work I am undone.

I wrote away doggedly, savagely, sullenly; putting down I know not what heavy stupidity, and growing more and more mutinous with each line. There had been three weeks of this sort of thing. My nerves were on edge, my temper past praying for, and I was ready to break into open rebellion,

when Mr. DeWitt remarked in my hearing that one of his Washington correspondents was shortly to marry a Congressman from a Western State, and he must fill her place.

"This is the third," he raged. "There is a fatality in it — I am not sure but he is from Utah, and all the same Congressman; but for my part I am tired of operating a matrimonial bureau in favour of literary young ladies."

"Then send me over; oh, please send me," I pleaded, ardently — here was the very respite I had demanded of fate. "I never had a try at political work. I long to attempt it. You have no idea how much I know about politics."

"Neither have you, I suspect," retorted my editor, with slashing frankness. "But it is not a political correspondent we want. It is —"

"Fashions?" I broke in, feverishly. "I could do them to the queen's taste — in a place like Washington."

Something seemed to be pulling at the back of my head. Uneasily, I looked around, and found the president standing in the door of his private room, his accusing eyes upon me. He had come in without my seeing him; but since he had heard my request, and was incensed thereat, I determined to be hung — there was nothing short of hanging in his eye — for the very largest sheep in the pasture.

"It isn't fashions, either," said Mr. DeWitt. "You must go about to functions, and write them up in breezy style. It is a high-grade society letter we want; the kind of thing, if my recollection serves me, which you once characterised as 'unspeakably loathsome work.'"

"Well, I should be glad to do it now," I answered. "I have known worse things since I talked that way. If you have any commission that will take me out of New York for awhile, do please give it to me — I promise to do my very best. You say that when I try I can always suit you."

Later, the president came past Bushrod Floyd's desk, where I sat at work, and laying upon my writing-pad a glove which I remembered to have left in the little studio, looked at me with not unkind reproach.

No word was spoken between us, and, stepping to Bushrod's drawing-board, he held there a low-toned conversation. My spirit always flinched from sight of these two together. If Frank showed the schoolmaster to me whom he loved and really approved, it was the judge's face he turned ever upon Bushrod. The latter was not only a suspected criminal before him, but one whose sentence — justly prepared — was merely suspended.

The elder man's attitude was even more distressing to me. That worst which was expected of him, he promptly supplied. Light, trashy, idle, impertinent — he was all of these with his cousin; and perverse in a mad fashion which should have amused, or even touched, the saner man.

Bushrod Floyd was the one exception I have ever seen to Francis Randolph's vocation for the handling of men. It was Frank's talent for administration, leadership, which had put him, in his youth, at the head of a great corporation like the Salem Publishing Company.

This house had been for years famous for its magnificent art works. When Frank returned from



abroad, he began with them, as a highly paid illustrator. Later, he had thought best to put his patrimony into its stock, had been first director, later art manager; and when its president died, a few weeks before my arrival in New York, he had been elected to that office.

Early in those days of enthusiastic work, as I gathered from the chance remarks of those concerned, he had gone home to Virginia and found his cousin, Bushrod Floyd, a fairly prosperous young lawyer in a country town.

The drawing which this country lawyer pursued as an amateur impressed Frank greatly. He urged ambition upon the possessor of so much talent. He rated — and rightly — his cousin's ability above his own. He offered a temporary position in the art department of the publishing house, and financial aid to the pursuit of proper studies.

Poor Bushrod! With a nice discrimination which never failed him at such a point, he accepted just those things, and declined just those others, which ensured him a modified failure or, at best, the minimum success. A position where he could work his way honestly, as he phrased it, he took. Money which would have fitted him for anything better, he refused.

The event was, naturally, unsatisfactory to both men. Francis Randolph was left to justify himself as best he might for having (even with the kindest intention) laid hands upon the life of another, and moved so actively in that other's affairs as to feel, in a sense, responsible for his failure.

Between the two lay, always fresh and available for new bitterness and misunderstanding, the ques-

tion of Bushrod's drinking. The few poor facts were these:

When New York with its larger opportunities, and his cousin's belief in him, began to press too hard upon Bushrod's imperfection, there resulted the first spree.

Having made this new, hopeful environment a place apt only for failure, having implanted in the minds of all about him a belief in his inevitable falling short, Bushrod added almost nothing to foster this belief; the outbreak was repeated but once or twice. And he endured the resultant atmosphere of criticism in which he must now live, with a patient dignity that was part of his acceptance of things, and which promised no retrieval.

Among his own people, all would have been easily forgotten. Back in the little Virginia town where he was born, if this thing happened (as it had happened a few times), why, he was one of the Floyds; there was not a negro on its streets but was ready to "ca'y Marse Bush home," not a hotel or boarding-house but would have offered him its temporary asylum.

Here in the great alien city, fronting Frank's chilly disgust it took on a different colour. What had been there a failing, a weakness, was here made a crime, and the doer of it was — to my thinking, at least — crucified daily for it.

Bushrod had, for his cousin, the smouldering hostility we feel toward those whom we love and fail to please; the bitterness of the faulty for the well-nigh faultless creature; the pained resentment of the weak, vulnerable, easily influenced nature toward the strong, poised, self-centred one.

"Burt tells me you are refusing to submit a design for the Bismarck poster," began the president.

"Burt informs you exactly," returned the other.

"I am sorry, Bush," pursued Frank, temperately.

"Why do you object to trying?"

"Because I have no ability for bill-board art — rotten stuff," retorted his cousin.

"The house needs the posters, and you need — what it would bring you. You have the very touch for it. I have been tempted to have some of your small designs enlarged for the purpose. Posters are attracting attention just now; it would bring you reputation."

"Thanks," drawled the big man. "You fellows who have studied in Paris have some queer ideas of art. I'm a bit old fashioned. Best let me alone. Let me draw my little tiddle-de-winks stuff which brings me bread and butter, and of which I'm not ashamed. Get Bernstein to do your posters."

And Frank went out with the knitted brow and stern lip which he was apt to bring away from an interview with Bushrod.

Later, when I rose to leave the office, Mr. DeWitt checked me at his desk, and motioned me to sit down in the chair beside his own.

"These," he began, spreading several letters before me, "are your various passports, letters of instruction and of introduction." He went through them with his quick, even, luminous clearness, so that my Washington life and work lay before me vividly distinct.

He took up the last one, and turning toward me said, "This is to our Miss Salem. You know of her?"

"Yes," I responded. "I understand that she owns — she inherited — much stock in the company. Her father was its founder, wasn't he? Some one said to me that she would be the president if she had happened to be a man."

"Yes. Just so," smiled Mr. DeWitt. "Well, she knows of you; it was she who most warmly approved Mr. Randolph's suggestion that I might bring you to New York. She is fond of your work. Of course she will be — both personally and in a business way — everything to you in Washington. I should, if I were you, take this letter to her immediately on arrival."

## CHAPTER XI.

### The Battle of the Sovereigns

"We commoners stood by the street façade  
And caught a glimpse of the cavalcade.  
In they swept, all riches and grace,  
Silks and satins, jewels and lace;  
In they swept from the dazzled sun."

BEFORE I left New York, I arranged my exceedingly limited domestic affairs satisfactorily.

Poor little Texas never really gave me his heart nor his confidence. He endured me, as dogs and women think they must endure people who are thrust upon them, patiently, resignedly. The Corcoran flat — I think I have mentioned that the Corcoran flat was more limited in extent than, for instance, a Western plain. It ever seemed to me, when we were all at home, overfull of people; and when Texas, just little, slim-legged, tremulous Texas was added to its inmates, it appeared really bursting with dog. And Texas regarded the Corcoran flat, the Corcoran cat and the Corcoran family, sadly. When they would have caressed him and made him one of them, he developed a valetudinarian air of being slightly ill.

But when, on a day, I allowed him to accompany me to the office, he immediately "took up" with Mr. DeWitt, and he was never afterward



dog of mine. The two had, it appeared, many things in common. Both were reserved, elegant, fastidious. Both deprecated all vociferation and demonstration. And they sympathised, I fancy, upon the matter of pedigree — a sympathy into which I could not enter.

So, when I was leaving New York for Washington, I took, and formally presented, Texas to Mr. DeWitt, wishing I were sure that he would receive my Washington copy after the same gracious fashion in which he accepted my dog, and that I could feel confident he would always be as kind to it.

So soon as I had well arrived in Washington, I went with my letter to Miss Salem, to find her all that Mr. DeWitt had forecast, besides very much more, which he could not have known or imagined. She was a New England woman of exceptionally fine culture, broadened and strengthened by her business experience. She had a big brain, hampered, limited here and there, by a somewhat narrow, passive conservatism which surprised one afresh every time it manifested itself. She was of a disposition most sweet and tender, and she had a quality so fine, a breeding so exquisite that, among all her excellencies of gift and cultivation, this fineness and high-breeding were most distinguished.

We pleased each other at once. For me, I loved everything about Priscilla Salem; and she appeared to find me a welcome feature in her life.

It was a surprising relation which established itself between us two women, almost from the first. I was Miss Salem's junior by fifteen years, an orphan, absolutely alone in the world, with no fortune except such as my pencil could conquer for me,

no wide circle of friends — a fairly pathetic figure the ordinary thinker would have found me. Francis Randolph so thought, and irked me with his pity.

She was a rich woman, a distinguished woman, with the honours and advantages of a man, with troops of friends — and those who usurped that name because they had interests to serve — perpetually offering admiration and incense at her shrine. And yet, as I say, from the first, what I felt for her was compassion. I was most sincerely fond of her at once; and it was an unformulated and unexpressed understanding that I was to cheer her, to comfort her, to give (out of my affluence) something which she lacked.

Her conventionality seemed at first rather formidable to me. I was uncertain of her till after our first trip out together. She developed, upon that occasion, just a delicate air of chastened Bohemianism which sat charmingly upon her; and we later took many such trips, indulging in a sort of Emersonian larking and holiday making that I found very delightful.

We were coming along Pennsylvania Avenue upon a certain afternoon, on our way home from one of these excursions, when Miss Salem remarked that it was public reception day at the White House.

I halted instantly, saying, "We'll go."

"Oh, no," demurred Miss Salem, "we must go there in the carriage, or we shall have to stand in line awaiting our turn. See that line of people half-way to the gate, two abreast? We might be an hour getting in!" and she looked a dainty cat revolting upon the edge of a muddy puddle.

But I was firm. I insisted that the spirit of the

thing was essentially democratic, and that we should go the whole animal, not availing ourselves of any adventitious advantages we might possess. So we approached the line, I very determined, Miss Salem still protesting scatteringly. In that line we stood a long time, only occasionally moving six or eight inches forward. There was an unkind mist in the air, and the pavement was damp. I was obliged to admit, finally, that I was much more uncomfortable than I had ever been before in the whole course of an adventurous career.

The carriage people, driving up and passing directly into the house, gave rise to mutterings of discontent in our ranks. Just behind us, a man with a planing-mill voice spoke with bitterness. I grew less and less happy momentarily. As for Miss Salem, she retired still further into herself. She looked still slenderer, and (without any appearance of arrogance) more distinctly high-bred and patrician. She glanced at me with gentle reproach. I, myself, had I spoken truth, would have confessed that my feelings in the matter of this particular enterprise had undergone change, and that somewhat less democracy would yet have been democratic enough for me.

Within the lobby, when at last we entered it, the crush was frightful. The marine band was making delightful music. The surroundings were rich and elegant; the crowd, that queer mixture we all know in such places, included everything; well-dressed persons of wealth and distinction, country brethren and sisters from far-back counties, many apparently just off the train, and with little grips clutched in their hands of honest toil.

I thought it all very funny, and enjoyed it gaily, not minding in the least the crowding and jamming. Suddenly, in the middle of our progress across the lobby, and in the fiercest of the onslaught, Miss Salem, behind me, ejaculated: "Miss West, your hair is coming down — oh, it is coming off!"

My hair was at that time four inches long. It was my custom to gather up all its rebellion (with more difficulty than a dull country parson experiences in getting together a lukewarm flock on a rainy Sunday), stick a hairpin through it, and pin on a knot of my own hair whose original connection with my head had been severed during an illness one year earlier.

I clapped my hand to the back of my head. Yes, the knot was coming off — it was hanging top end down! Neither of us could avert the catastrophe, hampered as we were by our gloves and wraps. A pale, mild-looking young man in a frolicsome coat approached and, seeing something was amiss, showed us the way to the dressing-room.

We found it impracticable to try to restore the edifice to my head. The hairpins seemed to have been torn out and lost in the hand-to-hand struggle across the lobby, and loose ends were bobbing everywhere. "Let the curls go," counselled Miss Salem. "I think they are charming. I never guessed you had such hyacinthine locks." So I rolled the hair up and (having nowhere else to put it) stuffed it into my muff, — a fanciful little structure of ribbon and lace with a mighty bunch of odorous violets tied atop of it, — and we once more joined the innumerable caravan.

We crossed the corridor, the red room, and were

precipitated into the blue room, where stood, captive and at bay, the innocent wife of the chief executive, supported upon the flank by several friendly ladies (friendly to her, you will understand).

A Choctaw version of our names was hurled in with us. We sidled, smiling, past the First Lady and those with her.

We ran the gauntlet, both there and in the green room beyond (where a crowd of assisting ladies were intrenched behind a barricading sofa and chairs), of forty or fifty pairs of curious eyes which stared with cold and alien looks at the passing stream, as though it had been an interesting zoological collection, which, I must admit, it did strongly suggest. I thought I knew how the animals in the circus feel; and I confess that the attitude of these women was most offensive to my free spirit. I had a prompting, such as animates the small boy, to shy things at them. However, I passed on, with only a haughty glance.

Dear Miss Salem was grateful for the Choctaw translation of her name, for the fact that none of the "receivers" (who, I bitterly reminded her, were as bad as the thief) would be expecting to see her in this motley procession of unassorted humanity which filed solemnly past them, and finally, for my tall figure, beside which she seemed to twilight along, safe from detection.

After many strange encounters and hairbreadth escapes, we met, in the conservatory, the Japanese minister and his wife, dressed in European costume. Mr. Hatsuko charmed me to the soul. His rare and original ugliness made a stronger appeal to my interest than the exquisite beauty of the orchids

near which he was standing. I studied with delight his amazing facial architecture, dwelling with equal joy upon his Hispano-Moresque nose and his Queen Anne mouth. I observed that he looked out at the world with a sort of Corinthian squint from under Indo-Japanesque eyebrows.

"Miss Salem," I remarked, innocently, "the Japanese minister's hair and whiskers are pure Arabesque, aren't they? They are straggling and random — evidently put there expressly for Japanese winds to blow through!"

Miss Salem's face flushed. She looked at the minister with open terror, and at me with the most merited reproach and reprehension. Poor dear, she was spared the worst; he had not heard me. And Retribution, in the person of a hurrying female, was at hand. The mere wind of this woman's haste, it seemed to me, tore the little violet-decked muff from my careless hand. The unconscious object of my rude scrutiny, with an instant and kindly courtesy which should have covered me with shame and self-reproach (and did, in truth, do just that) bent at once to restore it to me. He grasped at it, just struck it with the ends of his fingers; it slid gaily away from him, and out rolled in a curly mass my back hair!

The little man quite jumped back, and uttered an exclamation. Then came numbers of idle people, crowding around to see what the excitement was — I believe they thought I had pinched him. Poor Miss Salem's face was a picture of pained confusion; I myself felt most uncomfortable. Making a determined dive for my hair and my muff, I swept one up in each hand, thrust the former inside

the latter, clutched my companion's arm, and we hurried out.

I was as much ashamed as it is agreeable to be — I was more. Generally speaking, I have small faith in the usefulness of apologies. They are, not uncommonly, both feeble and offensive. But when we had thus made our exit from this last scene, and were walking quietly along G Street, the feeling was strong upon me that something of the sort was due Miss Salem. So I appealed, haltingly,

"Miss Salem, before you decide never to take me anywhere again, I — I wish to say that it isn't always this way with me — really, it is not. I cannot honestly claim that it is ever noticeably quiet and correct; but there are times — days together — when I seem able to do much better, and things go on quite as they do with other people; certainly they do not commonly run to this height."

"But —" she began, and I broke in eagerly,

"Please don't be uneasy upon the score of that disgraceful hair. I shall fasten it on tightly, with great shell pins. And I'll never, never try to drag you into a crush again, any more than I would if I knew myself to be cheaply made of plaster or *papier maché*, and all hollow inside. If you —"

"But," interrupted Miss Salem, and she turned upon me eyes wet with the tears of laughter, "I like you just so. During those peaceful seasons you speak of, the irresistible fascination you possess for me would be least in evidence.

"As it is, I shall soon be past all fear and anxiety on your account, all hesitation upon my own; for every time the worst again happens, I am again taught to feel confidence that the gods will not per-

mit you to be destroyed. Certainly they should not, for I know there is only one of you. Surely, there was never — there never will be — another.”

I sighed with relief. “Certainly nobody could be kinder than you are,” I declared. “I am so glad you take it that way. Then I am to just go on naturally — ?”

“By all means,” she interrupted, “if it is just natural for you to be quite the most preposterous and delightful of naughty girls.”

I glanced at her dubiously, but she was in good laughing earnest. So I said, “Well, the Corcorans are very nice about it, too. They think it rather good fun to take me about.”

“I should suppose so,” she returned. “My dear child, you are the modern version of that magic talisman which changed one’s identity; for (at least while I am with you) I see and hear and feel and know these old, stale, weary things I have been doing all my life, with other eyes and ears, other feelings and thoughts. It is alive, somehow. It offers suggestions, avenues, approaches, where always before it was a varnished surface — or at best a mechanical toy panorama.”

“Oh, how kind you are!” I exclaimed. “Now, at home — in Texas, I mean — they don’t think any of these things about me at all. I suppose that is because they are all just pretty much like me.”

“That they are not!” she cried, laughing afresh. “I am well persuaded that there is nowhere — not even in Texas, since that is where you pretend to come from — anybody at all resembling you.”

The very next day I came suddenly upon Jim Baxter, where he stood in front of Peale’s picture



of Washington in the Senate lobby. I knew him instantly, though I had supposed him two thousand miles away in West Texas. I could not be mistaken. What Miss Salem had said of me was certainly true of Jim; there was nowhere anybody just like him.

A Devil River cattle and sheep ranchman in Texas, Jim had got rich at the business, very rich. That means that he had more grit and courage than another man; that he had laughed at hardship, privation and loneliness, "stayed with" the sheep through good and bad luck, in all weathers and all sorts of seasons, lodging and faring pretty much as they lodge and fare — under the open skies; and that this unflinching pluck and persistence had earned their reward.

He was twenty-eight or thirty years old, big, handsome like some prehistoric royalty, bluff, kind, entirely fearless, generous, a little quick to anger, but more quickly reconciled, and making haste to claim the greater share of fault.

I always thought Jim's mind belonged properly to an earlier period of the world; simple, childlike, direct, forceful, he would have shone splendidly as a Saxon king. He had just the qualities for a monarch of the stalwart order. It was indicated no less by his physical beauty, superiority and courage, than by the perfectly natural way in which he had taken to purple, fine linen, and all sorts of glorious pomp and circumstances upon meeting them. No, there was certainly nothing like him in size, style and spirit, even in Washington, from the ineffable cock of the expressive soft hat, the great shoulders, squared in entirely natural and unconscious command, beneath his fashionable garments, to the well-gloved hands crossed nonchalantly behind him.

So I went quietly up, touched his arm, and said, as if continuing a recently interrupted conversation, "And when did they run you out of the Devil River country, Jim?"

He turned his big handsome face and leonine front upon me. The light of recognition broke over him; he lunged at me like a grizzly, grabbed me with both great paws, then abruptly dropped me, drew back haughtily, and angrily brushed the sleeve I had touched.

"Oh, you make me tired!" he announced. "Here I come to Washington in the interest of the Western sheep fellows, just loaded down to the guards with authority, and all the 'stuff' I want, to see that Congress does us right in — well" — (in disdainful recognition of my inferior sex) "in certain matters — yes, by George, and to snatch 'em bald-headed if they don't! And blest if you don't come along, a little thing size of my fist, talking right up to me same as you always did, just like I was common folks! I never could get any respect into you — nor out of you. You've got no sort of *savey*. 'Jim!' 'Mr. Baxter,' if you please. Say! Where you going? Can't I go, too? I haven't anything particular to do till six o'clock."

I did not say how glad I was to have him "go too." On principle, I only gave a dignified permission, and immediately took him to call upon Miss Salem.

We talked much upon the way, and my soul was renewed. For Jim was ever as wholesome and refreshing as the air of his own Texas plains. Indeed, this little visit with him was like the breath of the gulf breeze itself.

We found Miss Salem at home, and alone; and I was never more pleased with my own judgment in bringing two people together.

To our hostess's rather stereotyped inquiries as to how he liked Washington, Jim said, "Why, it seems to me a little like a drug-store where the labels have all got swapped. I mean," in answer to our looks of inquiry, "that the finest-looking men I've seen are nobody in particular. And then a fellow comes shuffling along with an outfit that looks as though his friends had clothed him and they were all of 'em odd sizes one way or another. He'll have a face like an early rose potato, and they will tell you that he is the mainest person in Washington."

"I have noticed something like that," smiled Miss Salem. "It follows the law of compensation."

"Maybe," agreed Jim. "It just looked like swapped brands to me. Senator Randolph, and his father, Chief Justice Randolph, are almost the only men I've seen who look their parts."

Miss Salem thereupon rather surprised me by giving Jim an invitation to a reception at the house of Chief Justice Randolph. He was an uncle of Francis Randolph, and we had been twice entertained at his home.

Jim accepted the invitation, and added, "I am going to dinner at his son's house that same evening. Mr. Champe Randolph, the Senator from Virginia, is chairman of the committee I'm worrying to death; and he seems never to get enough of me."

"Then we meet you at dinner also. The Champe Randolphs make their home with the Chief Justice while Congress is in session," explained Miss Salem, "and Miss West and I are dining there Wednesday."

To me, later, she said, "I gave the invitation to the reception because I can see how Mr. Baxter's point of view will be invaluable to you in your work. You play at being a bit naïve and Western; but he really is — and so charmingly expansive about it."

This was an epitome of Miss Salem's ability. She could help others to do things which she did not — could not — herself attempt. An infallible judge of the best in literature, many a book upon the Salem Publishing Company's list owed its inception, and even much of its subsequent treatment, to her editorial acumen.

## CHAPTER XII.

### In The Chamber of Echoes

"I see a voice : now will I to the chink,  
To spy if I can hear my Thisbe's face."

IF a man who hath once seen the light — a man to whom the true gods have come, in the silence of his inner life, and made him their own — fall thereafter into sin and into the making of graven images, to prostrate himself before them and worship them, such an one's punishment shall be greater than that of another.

I had, till the coming of Francis Randolph, wooed the muse with a single heart. Pure English had been to me as pleasant waters, and the using of it to ends of some importance, as daily bread.

According to my definition of the word, I was "good" all the time I was in New York. Excepting the small and temporary aberration of my hated labours on the big book, my conduct as a citizen and a worker was satisfactory. I fled temptation, and was wise in season; doing only those things which pleased me, and thereby grasping the reward of virtue (a present content) in simplest fashion.

Now, suddenly, because my heart ached whenever my eyes beheld a certain person, I faced about upon my ideals, kicked them out at door, and announced

myself ready to gad about to foolish functions, and describe them — not in my own fashion, but with the fulsomeness of a Jenkins. So much Mr. De Witt had led me to see was required, and so much I was mortgaged to do.

Miss Salem had a beautiful summer home in the New England village where she was born, a house in New York, and an apartment here, so that she might comfortably divide her winters between the two cities most important in the syndicate service of the Salem Publishing Company.

Her parlours were thronged; there was always something of a festive social, literary or official nature afoot which she thought it would be disastrous for me to miss. She laid snares for my feet — with the best intentions in the world — and I finally gave up trying to keep out of them.

I went on from Miss Salem and Miss Salem's friends to Miss Salem's dressmaker. I graduated from occasional recreation into dissipation and prodigality. Oh, yes, I must have "two coats and everything handsome about me."

I wasted my substance — my strictly limited substance — upon riotous evening gowns and English driving wraps. The deep emotions of my heart, the inspired labours of my fertile brain and nimble fancy, I gave to nice questions concerning the relative merits and usefulness of gorgeous passementeries and plain tailor finishes.

And what had I for my sins? A nineteenth century version (*perversion*) of a Louis Quinze coat, with (I said it in deep humiliation, almost in tears) a Medicis collar, leg-o'-mutton sleeves covered with jet nail-heads — in short, a sort of dress-

maker's French Revolution in tissue and beads and silk.

When I lifted this monstrosity from its box, my key-cold fingers relaxed and dropped the thing upon a couch. I stood before it — a garment so much worse-looking than merely an old or a poor dress — in deep abasement and mortification of soul. Madame Schwalben's smile was as false as her hair and her teeth; the whole fabric of Madame's walk and conversation was an ancient and carelessly constructed fraud, like her complexion. Through the odour of her perfumes, various and potent as they were, the raw onion ever spoke remindingly, even as, through all her pretence of elegance and refinement, untamable native vulgarity pushed forward. What hypnotism, then, what black magic, had enabled her to thrust upon a freeborn citizen (here I slapped my chest with my open palm) a fit example of Lone Star gallantry, and withal a person of brains and experience — a thing (and here I smote my forehead with my clenched fist) like — *that?*

When the tooth of remorse was deepest in my liver, it happened that Miss Salem called. She expressed some surprise at the air of settled gloom with which I regarded my acquisition, and inquired innocently as to whether or no I liked my dress which Madame had just sent in.

"Fate — or Providence —" said I, severely, "has seemed to neglect the justice of this case. It has apparently looked idly on, or paid attention to something else, while this woman, a servant, a barbarian, a mere outsider, has impudently committed her remunerative iniquities —"

"Oh, you did not like the dress," murmured Miss Salem, comprehendingly. "You feel put out at Madame."

"I do not suffer myself to remain in impatience," I returned, with dignity, "nor to be really deceived upon the matter. Such crimes —"

"You mustn't be too hard on poor Madame," laughed Miss Salem, indulgently. "Blame yourself a little. She makes very nice frocks for me. I fancy you rather flew to her head. Commissioned to clothe a figure like yours, my young willow-wand princess, she experienced a rush of the divine afflatus without being, in fact, a poet — and the result is hybrid."

"No," I agreed, "she is certainly not a poet."

"You are cruel," protested Miss Salem.

When I was really in earnest about things, Miss Salem found me great fun.

"I am anything but cruel," I assured her. "Previous to this dressmaker episode, I should have described my character as wanting even that small amount of severity requisite to entire justice. But my eyes are now open. I see myself (and with joy) to be the sort of pickle in whose composition the saving ginger has not been spared. I tell you, my dear Miss Salem, it does my heart and my soul and my digestion, my diaphragm and my morals, all good to think how Fate will meet up with Madame for such tricks."

Miss Salem's sweet face became serious. "Wasn't that your dinner dress for Wednesday?" she asked, apprehensively. And then she took the structure up and examined its warring factions of



ornament, making little soft inarticulate sounds of surprise or reproach over its absurdities.

"Why, this will never do at all," she mourned, "and the dinner is to-morrow night!"

"I can wear my old white," I answered, easily.

"Oh, no," objected Miss Salem. "I am to be in white, and" — with one of her rare little flashes — "it is a new frock, and rather particularly gorgeous. No, you shall still be in pink — as we planned. How about the skirt to this strait-jacket?"

For answer, I held up the long, shimmering folds of soft purplish pink, with its mere hinting undertone of the rhododendron, flattering the eye, as two related notes in music charm the ear, with harmony.

"Oh — why — that will be all right," Miss Salem declared. "Just have several skirts made of that lighter pink tissue — it can be done in two hours — each with its little feathery frill. You will look like a big blush rose." (Frank's very words — how they pained!) "There is the little plain low bodice, and Madame shall come up and drape it with the tissue after you have it on. Yes, you'll be a blush rose."

Again the flower of wounding memory. Washington — as a place of refuge from pursuing heart-aches — fell something short of the Barcan desert, or the Oregonian woods. I might have known, I reflected, that all running away is futile, that life's problems follow life like its own shadow; and I turned from Miss Salem with a sigh.

She laughed, "Pray, do not look so blue over it. I assure you it is an honour to have Madame come and drape you, and she does it exquisitely.

She draped me — just twenty years ago this winter — for my first big official function in Washington. She will do it, if I ask her.”

Miss Salem was pleased at the ardent interest I expressed in this far-away frock and occasion.

“I was my father’s housekeeper,” she told me, “and I had no chaperone, so Mrs. Randolph (the present Chief Justice was a Supreme Judge then) introduced me at a — well, a party — a German, I believe it was. We did not have teas for that purpose so much in those days, and an evening reception with dancing was quite the thing.”

“Don’t you love to dance!” I exclaimed.

“I used to. I remember I was quite wild with joy that night. I told you Madame draped my bodice. We wore skirts ruffled to the waist. That doesn’t sound pretty; but mine was filmy white, edged everywhere with crystal bugles, and it was pretty and becoming. My cheeks were almost as pink as yours, and I felt like a fairy.”

I had received that morning a letter from Bushrod Floyd. It began without address:

“You did not give me permission to write you, but you would have done so had I asked it.

“That is rank presumption — isn’t it? And yet I am sure if you could know what a howling wilderness and desert the office looks without your sunny face to shine on it once in awhile, you would forgive me for trying, as a poor substitute for the sight of you and the sound of you, to write you one letter.

“DeWitt is away, looking after some contracts in Boston. He left Texas in my care, and we — Texas and I — hold long, serious-minded conversa-

tions about you. We think, for one thing, that you are not happy over there in Washington (where we cannot see you), doing those society letters which we know you loathe — though, ourselves, we greatly delight in them, and declare them less like society letters and more like literature than anything either of us ever saw in a newspaper column.

“We wonder — Texas and I — why you went there; but the movements of the stars are past finding out to a fellow who can only lie on his back in the dark and look up to and worship them.

“Miss Bucks gave me your last letter to her to read. Miss Bucks is not a handsome angel, but I could see the wing-tips, nevertheless. Poor girl! A fellow feeling makes us wondrous keen-sighted sometimes, as well as kind! I find I have neglected Miss Bucks. The fact of *you* throws a new light upon her, as it has upon everything else in my life. I suppose, in our selfish gloom, we are often missing things which might help us out; but I shall not miss Miss Bucks any more. I have looked at her with new eyes. I have seen her descending from heaven, your letter in hand, and to me she is forever glorified.

“Even Frank feels the gloom which has enveloped the shop without you, and is savage to a degree heretofore unknown. Corcoran says that there are vague and terrible threats of your remaining some time — I will not say permanently, though that was his word. I will not set it down, lest it come true.

“I wonder how many times you have thought of the office amid the scenes of grandeur which you are now gracing — to put the thing up in regular society letter style. And, if you have thought of

the office at all, I wonder if the figure of a fat old fellow over in the corner (who looks up expectantly when the door opens and looks down dejectedly every time it isn't you who open it), is part of the thing for you.

"I consign you, with this, about 'steen lines of verse. If you don't like to read 'em, come back from Washington and defend yourself.

"Always devotedly yours,  
"BUSHROD FLOYD."

The letter's presentment might have been described as *de luxe*. Its little square of tiny-charactered matter occupied less page space than the wide margins, and upon these latter were the most delicious bits of sketches; Texas and its writer, sitting at the solemn talks; Miss Bucks (an excellent portrait, with but the wings added) descending from the clouds; a sketch of Frank, scowling as he rejected one of his cousin's drawings; Mr. Corcoran at his desk, with Texas beside him begging for sweets, — a familiar group.

This marginalia brought the office up so vividly before me, that I handed the letter to Miss Salem. "There are some things in it which might interest you," I remarked, carelessly, and turned once more to that hopeless coat.

She was a long time silent, looking over the letter; then I felt her touch upon my arm, and turned to find her beautiful dark eyes shining with tears. "Poor fellow!" she murmured. "Poor Bushrod Floyd! It is his luck to know the better and to choose the worse — or rather, to let the worse choose him."

I put back the letter, with an uneasy twinge. "Oh, you take him too seriously," I objected. "He has always adopted that chaffing, sentimental tone with me—it doesn't mean anything."

"Doesn't it?" inquired Miss Salem, a little absently. Then she added, with sweet gentleness, "I have not only lived longer than you, my dear, but I have known Bushrod Floyd longer. His cousin, Mr. Randolph—"

I winced inwardly, and so I moved impatiently. She looked at me and hesitated, then went on,

"They are as much alike as black and white. I should never think of defending Francis Randolph from a woman," and she smiled a bit humourously at the suggestion.

"Well, dear me! the other one flirts with everything that comes along, doesn't he?" I responded. "He literally flows with sentiment."

"No," demurred Miss Salem, "there is a difference. There is a distinction to be drawn; a fine one, but then, Bushrod Floyd's nature is fine, almost feminine; and the distinctions in it are delicate. He is, as you say, peculiarly accessible to the influence of women. Any girl who cares to can make love to him, and he will respond; I suppose he would respond very readily—and carelessly. But that he should find strength in his slothful nature, fire among his ashes, to come forward and take the initiative,—it is this that is more than touching to me. It is tragic."

My mind went back over the history of my acquaintance with the man, and it misgave me that she was right. With what strangely childlike naïveté had he advanced from jesting lightness to

a more serious tone. In quaint contrast with the physical man was this virginal freshness of feeling. Did not his inches and his years make the comparison absurd, one would have said that he was as timid in such matters as a young girl.

"I wish you had not said that," I fretted. "My state is none too blissful anyhow, this morning. Whenever I attempt to write, there strikes through me, from my middle shirt-stud to a spot between my shoulder-blades, a sensation (it isn't a pain exactly) as though Despair's hard glove had laid a most ungentle tap upon my solar plexus; and thereupon that great sub-station answers with a groan that shivers along all its miles of wires."

Miss Salem was unexpectedly firm with me. "Pretty young women who go about the world casting their *beaux yeux* upon all sorts and conditions of men shall never lack for such information as I can give them," she maintained. "It may amuse you to put the comether upon Bushrod Floyd, but indeed it is not kind — I do not wonder there is an ache under your middle shirt-stud at the results."

"There isn't," I retorted, indignantly. "If I had never done anything worse than be pleasant to poor Bushrod Floyd, I should not have heartache, and headache. It is the thought of Mr. DeWitt that is troubling me."

I looked up to find a most curious expression upon my caller's face. "Justin DeWitt," she repeated. "Is he — do you —"

She halted, and I broke in, "Oh, he's all that is kind and patient with the slow, the blundering — he will even forgive stupidity. But with the un-

ready, the of-laziness-suspected, I've found his temper brief, brief as first love, and crisp as a Saratoga chip. I tell you it is uncontinuing, sudden, unsure, fragile!"

"He is wonderfully clever," was Miss Salem's somewhat irrelevant comment.

"He is clever enough to know what ails the copy I haven't sent in," I replied. He will be well aware that I have clothed myself in soft raiment, and danced and sung and made merry with the idle and the ungodly, revolving blithely round the savoury fleshpots of Egypt, while the tasks I forbore grew like the evil genius of the bottle."

Miss Salem was always helpful, and I am sure the cleverest creature to plan work of any non-writing person I ever knew. It seemed to me now that a certain relief added alacrity to the aid she lent me.

"The coupé is waiting," she said, "and I am going to take you to the Capitol to do the hall of echoes. It will fill out your letter about the homes of Cabinet ministers very nicely."

I went meekly for my hat and note-book.

Arrived at the Capitol, Miss Salem found one particular guide who she said knew the echoes better than any other, and had him to show us about. Of those wonderful echoes, I only recall two, because they concerned themselves in my affairs.

The guide first placed me on a certain square of marble in the tessellated floor, and going back a hundred feet or more, stood facing toward me, when suddenly his voice, tremendously magnified, came down out of the dome and enveloped me in its sonorousness. Every word seemed to wrap me

about, so enormous were the tones, yet not even Miss Salem, three feet away from me, heard a sound of them, and people passed all about me without so much as looking up.

The other echo that remains in my memory, that one to display which the guide set me very carefully upon a square near one of the entrances, and taking Miss Salem, went so far away that I could only see them fairly, and, in the surrounding movement and talk, could scarcely have heard them in a Yazoo yell.

After a moment, a whisper of Miss Salem's voice came vaguely stealing up about my feet from beneath the marble floor.

I stood there listening to this gentle ghost of her voice conveying to my ear tender nothings concerning what we were to have for lunch. The little vocal ghost left off for a moment, when suddenly came Frank's tones, those unforgettable, un-forgotten, wooing tones, "Carita, beloved, are you tired of quarrelling with me?" they said. "Are you ready, as I am, to forget it?"

The voice whispered and plead about my knees. The heart in my bosom leaped with a curious fluttering movement as though it had clapped its wings. I could not, for my life, have uttered one word.

I knew, of course, that he was standing across there on the stone that was twin of mine whispering to me. The thought that he had cared enough to follow me to Washington was very sweet. He always cared more than he expressed; he always did more than he said. The haughtiest, proudest nature I have ever known, and the most self-willed, he desired to have the thing he wanted offered him. And yet, so far as I was concerned, having tried



vainly to put me in the position of suitor, he often took the part himself with sudden and sweet humility.

I was silent so long that the whisper came again. "Dearest, how lovely you look," it breathed. "I can see you past all these people." Then, for the first time, I thought to look over, and caught a glimpse of his graceful, endearing dark head, prayerfully bent, as he stood whispering to me.

"You won't answer me," he went on. "Are you afraid to? Are there people standing near you? They will not hear. Well, put up your hand to your hair if — if it is 'yes.'"

My hand rose almost without my volition. "The dear little white toiler," came Frank's vibrant tones, "The blessed flag of truce." And there rose from the stone at my feet a sort of sigh, made, I fancy, by the passing across its twin of his boot, and in a minute or two more his voice said rather breathlessly behind my shoulder, "Miss Salem says I am to take you over to her."

On our way across, we passed the stone where I had heard the big enveloping voice. Striving for some commonplace topic to converse upon, I told Frank of it.

"Wait a moment!" he exclaimed, with shining eyes. "Oh, here come Miss Salem and the guide. Will you two ladies please remain here while he shows me where I should be to communicate with you."

I was left standing with my face to the great entrance and the clock, Miss Salem smiling beside, but not too near me. Suddenly, down from the dome came a torrent of melody and love, Frank's wonderful voice, magnified till it filled — the universe.

"Carita — Carita!" it called to me. "What a beautiful name you have. I catch myself repeating it all day long, as if it were a bit of poetry, or a song, or a spell to conjure by. And it is all three to me, love. Have you forgiven me?"

I glanced guiltily around, and Miss Salem laughingly shook her head. "I hear only a jumble of sounds," she reassured me. "And he could not hear you, if you were to shout."

Then came the great voice again, wrapping me about with the very panoply of Love itself. "Why did you not answer me when I stood where you might have spoken?" it questioned. "You are an angel, and you have the tongue of an angel. I should have understood exactly whatever you had said. Even the little flag of truce was almost too good to be true."

## CHAPTER XIII.

### “Through the Seventh Gate”

“These are blind fancies — reason cannot know  
What sense can neither feel, nor thought conceive.”

It was arranged that my dress should be sent directly to Miss Salem's apartment, and that I should go there to dress for the Randolph dinner. I was in that uncertain, fluctuating mind, a mood vibrating between half-drugged pain and half-awakened bliss, which always followed upon a reconciliation with Frank.

I found Miss Salem already dressed, looking unbelievably tall and stately and handsome in her long clinging dinner-gown of lustreless white silk, with clasp and girdle of dull silver, “which just match,” she said, “those unkind little ornaments that Time is threading on my temples.”

I laughed incredulously at the thought of there being any silver in her dark hair. “Why did you dress so early?” I inquired.

“To get unimportant me out of the way,” she told me, “so that I might try a not altogether unskilled hand at making you beautiful.”

The box from Madame's had come up earlier, and by the time that lady herself arrived I was manicured, coiffured, and gotten into the pink silk with

its floating gauzy overlays. These, shifting about me, fascinated my eyes with wonderful hints of sunset cloud effects.

Madame brought with her some extra yards of the pink tissue, a gross of coral-headed pins, and an air of grave preoccupation. For ten minutes after her arrival, I was turned, discussed, pulled this way and that, and had pins thrust into me as though I had been a sawdust-stuffed doll instead of the living sort, till I arrived at a very appropriately low estimate of my importance.

At the end of that time, Miss Salem said, in agreement with the twentieth repetition of an assertion of Madame's, "Yes, there must be something; we need a little sparkle — some ornaments." And she added, standing back from me and looking at me through narrowed eyes, exactly as though I were any other work of art, "Cara, would you wear some corals of mine?"

I was not expected to reply. Madame promptly answered for me, and with much satisfaction, "The very thing. Get them at once, please, Miss Salem. We're late."

When the corals were laid out on the dressing-table, they fairly made me gasp. There was truly some coral about them; but there were more diamonds than anything else. "Oh, I couldn't!" I began, impulsively. "These are much too beautiful and valuable. Why do you never wear them, Miss Salem?"

For the first time since I had known her, Miss Salem looked at me a trifle impatiently. "They would be much better on your pretty neck and arms," she said, "than lying shut up in a box."

Her pensive eyes drooped to the glittering ornaments, and her slender fingers caressed the bosses of soft glowing pink. "Do you know how often I have worn these, Cara?" she asked, a little sadly. "Never once. Father got them for me, that first winter I was in Washington. They are Florentine work. Like all old-fashioned people, he supposed a dark-eyed girl should wear pink; but they have always been very unbecoming to me; and yet I couldn't bear to have father's gifts broken up and reset. Wear them, child. The corals will just match your cheeks to-night, and I am sure the diamonds are not a bit brighter than those big eyes of yours."

While Miss Salem and I were talking sentiment, Madame had been busily fastening the ornaments in place, exactly as though there had been from the first no question of their use. Now she led me toward the tall mirror, which I had left to look at the jewels. "There," she pronounced, in her usual poetic and felicitous fashion, "I say you look perfectly elegant. Those jewels are swell — simply swell!" And dropping back a step or two, she left me, rather breathless and astonished, to make the acquaintance of that new Carrington West who looked curiously out at me from the mirror.

The hair-dresser had said that she did not care whether my coiffure looked like short hair or done-up hair. She asserted with confidence that she would make "a sort of compromision" of it. The result was a few soft curling locks which ran into what were then called finger-puffs, bound and fastened as a crest upon my head with a curious ornament of coral and diamonds which was more like a quaint,

shining dagger thrust through than anything else. Such of the wayward locks as chose to escape and curl about my neck and temples were left unreproved.

Madame's draping was indeed perfection. No bodice sewed in seams could have had quite the ineffable "cling" of this one which her clever fingers had pinned upon me. Excitement had made good Miss Salem's comparison between my eyes and the diamonds. Taller by an inch than even her tall self, my slenderness sweetly rippled about by skilfully used gauzes, I was ready to answer to my hostess's exultant query, "Now aren't you a beauty?" "Well, you and Madame have certainly made me one."

We were going down to the carriage, I bearing the great sheaf of roses which had come with Francis Randolph's card in it, when we met a messenger boy with another box of flowers. This one had followed me from my boarding-place, the sender evidently not knowing, as Frank did, that I was to dress at Miss Salem's. Indeed, there was nothing to indicate who the sender of these exquisite orchids might be.

"It must have been Jim," I speculated, as I searched through the papers for a card. "He knows I often wear pink."

But Miss Salem murmured, as we went back to the room and added a few of the gorgeous, soulless, significant blossoms to my roses, "Bushrod is an extravagant fellow."

The Randolph house is a little out of Washington; that is, it stands upon one of those hills to the west of the city where there were stately country

homes nearly a hundred years ago. This one was built by Justice Randolph's uncle, then Secretary of State. Later, it had passed out of the Randolph family into other hands; but when the Judge was called to the Supreme Court he repurchased it, and the family divided their time between it and the Virginia plantation upon which all of his children were born. It was a very beautiful and imposing house, whose original size and simplicity had been overlaid from year to year with modern adornments and utilities. And yet, there was a usage about its elegance, a wonted air about its most stately appointments, which is sometimes lacking in the homes of even very rich Americans. Everything seemed to say to you, "I am barely good enough for the use of my owner." In other words, the habitation did not, in this case, lend illustriousness to the family; but rather, the family graced their habitation.

I was always astonished to find myself taller than stately little Mrs. Randolph. When she entered a room, that high-held silver-white head of hers seemed ever the loftiest in it; but she was, in reality, a slender, fragile little person, who might fairly have walked under my arm. She and her large blonde daughter-in-law made Miss Salem and myself hospitably welcome.

"We four are to be the only Caucasian women at the table," explained Mrs. Randolph. "We have six couples. The others are the Japanese minister and his wife —"

I flinched, Miss Salem shrank visibly, and Mrs. Randolph hastened to add, "They are most agreeable people. Madame Hatsuko is especially clever and engaging. Then there is Ali Rustem Bey, the

Turkish ambassador; and as Madame Rustem does not attend other than harem affairs, Rustem Bey brings his private secretary in place of his wife."

"And you will find the secretary more interesting than the ambassador," added Justice Randolph. "Young Tewfik Bey was born a Turk; but I think he has lived — and to good purpose — in every country on the globe. If there is an actual language which he does not speak, it must belong to some western tribe of Indians, or some northern people like the Eskimos. His enormous utility to Rustem Bey and the Turkish government is his familiarity with all Eastern tongues and dialects."

I glanced up and saw Frank in the doorway. It is not a test of a man's goodness — the way evening dress becomes him; but it certainly is often a touchstone which reveals his birth and breeding. Young Mr. Randolph had said to me, laughingly, once before, that his mother held to their Virginia servants, negroes trained on the Randolph and Floyd plantations, because it made it so easy at an evening party for ladies to distinguish the waiters from the guests. I had heard the jest in other forms, and truly there are good men and great who look like waiters — and not head waiters, either — in their evening clothes.

But for Frank, I had never seen him look one half so graceful, so handsome, so perfect as he now did, coming forward to greet his aunt, Miss Salem, his cousin's wife, and then my happy self.

I saw, by the way his pleased eyes lingered on every curl and ornament, that I had found one thing which I could do in a way which delighted him.

"You have honoured my roses," he said, smiling



down to where their nodding heads lay across my arm.

"They have the good taste," I answered, gaily, "to be exactly what was needed for the finish of my costume. It was lovely of you to know. Thank you so much."

"Some one else sent you orchids," he added, touching the bit of air-nurtured, gossamer loveliness caught in among the rose stems. "It is always roses and Cara, to me. I should never think of orchids — unless you specially fancy them. Do you?"

This was Frank at his sweetest. He sought not only to give me what he deemed fitting and appropriate, but that which I preferred. I hastened to say, "Oh, no, I love the roses best. They seem to me so much more real and wholesome and natural." And even as I spoke, the pink orchid reproached me with its elfin and ethereal beauty, and I heard again Miss Salem murmur, "Poor Bushrod!"

The Orientals arrived within ten minutes of each other. Miss Salem and I were happy women indeed when we fully understood that neither Mr. nor Madame Hatsuko was aware of having seen us before. I faltered — I could not help it — whenever I thought of that crowd of faces pressing around us there in the White House conservatory, where I had apparently pinched the little man. As for Miss Salem, she blushed, extempore, every time he glanced at her. But I realised that we looked so very different in evening dress that all was secure.

Justice Randolph took in Madame Hatsuko, Mrs. Randolph went with Mr. Hatsuko; the Turkish minister fell to Miss Salem, and Jim looked very



“‘IT IS ALWAYS ROSES AND CARA, TO ME’”



happy and very suitable beside tall, fair Belle Randolph, a Virginia girl who had been in Texas several times and was quite as used to a seat in the saddle as one in a rocking-chair, and much fonder of it. I might naturally have fallen to the share of young Mr. Randolph, her husband, and it pleased me to think that a whispered word I saw Frank give his aunt before we went down, prompted her to send us in together, young Mr. Randolph and the Turkish ambassador's secretary following.

The table was banked with American Beauties, just then beginning to be most favoured. Frank insisted that the decorations were arranged to match my frock. I looked down the softly lighted, snowy, glittering expanse, and listened to the low-toned conversation and laughter. The Turkish minister was a small man; I should have taken him for a Hebrew. He wore a green fez, and his hair and moustache were white. Altogether a silent, stately, intellectual-looking man. His secretary had from the first enchained my attention. Tall, finely formed, with an appearance of absolute health, I have never seen a physique which, even in speech and action, so fully bodied forth the idea of repose. He was poise itself. Calm, slow-speeched, quiet-footed, graceful of movement, it was not alone his body which seemed unhurried. You might know, when you looked at him, that his soul dwelt always in the place of peace.

I was studying this man's face, with the full curved lips lying softly one upon the other like those of an idol, his large, calm eyes, with their regular, equal curve of upper and lower lid, so different from the fretful Occidental line of most

American brows, when Frank's voice roused me, saying, "We must have Tewfik read palms or predict destinies after dinner."

"He looks as though he could do it," I observed.

"He can," Frank assured me.

It was a picked company about that beautiful table. From where the Chief Justice, a type of the polished Virginian, the scholarly lawmaker, sat at its head, with Madame Hatsuko's little dark, gem-like countenance on his right, past Champe Randolph's nervous, energetic version of the Randolph type, and Mr. Tewfik's impassive smile, and long, slow-moving eyes; Miss Salem's exquisitely refined, intellectual face; to the foot, where stately patrician Mrs. Randolph looked dainty and fragile and exquisite between the curved beak and dark flashing face of the Turkish minister and Mr. Hatsuko's distinguished oriental ugliness.

The Chief Justice was a beautiful old man with a great domed head, clear, dark, intelligent eyes that looked so brilliant in their wonderful, hollowed orbits. The nose was fine, and there were delicate hands and feet — features, I was beginning to learn, which belonged to the Randolph family. I saw this high type varied somewhat in his son, and further varied in his nephew who sat beside me. Yet in all three it was the type; regnant, giving — not accepting — the word.

I glanced on to Jim. Here was the best example of Western man. There were no traditions behind him. He had stature, beauty, and a physical balance which was good to see; a hawk-like freedom of glance, a stag-like freedom of unconscious movement; a port and bearing that stooped itself before

nothing. Yet he said in every line and glance and gesture, "Here come I, with all I am and all I have in my hand and my brain."

They said in each look and attitude and modulated tone, "Here we stand, for our line, for our traditions, beliefs, cultivation." The summing up of their position was, to my thinking, "We represent; we are results. Make then your submission to us, put forward your offerings before us, and it shall be considered."

He interrupted, "I am Cause itself. Way there!"

Something of this, though far from being phrased in this fashion, I said to Frank, and he accepted it smilingly. "Yes," he agreed, "and what of Carita? Is she merely the onlooker?"

"I am certainly neither Western nor Eastern," I answered. "I was born in one place, and brought up in so very many others besides Texas that I am a woman without a country."

"The country of the heart will always belong to you," murmured Frank. "You speak the universal language, Carita. From Lemuel and Uncle Champney (Aunt Helen's butler, who just now moved this epergne to find an excuse for looking at you) up — or down, is it? — to me, and — the others, we all come to you with full faith that you will understand."

As his voice ceased, we both noticed that Jim was speaking. Justice Randolph had asked him a question as to the truth of the statement that large numbers of Mexican sheep-herders go mad from loneliness.

"They do, indeed, sir," returned Jim. "There are plenty of them in the asylums in Texas. I have

shaved that fate so close myself that I feel great sympathy with them."

"Did you ever herd sheep?" inquired young Mrs. Randolph, who was not without information as to life in the Texas cattle country.

"Why, no, I never exactly herded sheep," answered Jim, modestly. It made me smile to hear him tell it so quietly, for though Jim had created almost every dollar of his own large fortune, beginning as a very young fellow with a small stock given by his father, yet he was born on a great ranch the size of a small Eastern county. His father before him was a brilliant but reckless cattle and sheep man, who was, according as the market shifted, or his various deals were fortunate or disastrous, a baron or a poor man.

"No, this wasn't herding," Jim added, "it was something almost as lonesome, though — sign riding."

Everybody was silent, now, listening to Jim. "I had gone up into the Panhandle, to look after some sign-camps on my Staked Plain ranges. You know what a sign-camp is?"

The Chief Justice shook his head, and Jim explained, "A sign-camp is a dugout, or a tent or a shack or a 'dobe — something two men can live in. You put a line of sign-camps at equal distances around the edge of your range, and you put two as good men as you can get in each of them. In the morning these two men get up, have their breakfast and ride away in opposite directions, till each one meets a man from the next sign camp — it's a sort of living fence around your range. They look for sign of straying cattle, and turn them back on to

the range. The distance is supposed to be great enough that this takes half the man's day. He gets down and eats his dinner, perhaps with the man from the other camp; and he takes the rest of his day to ride back to his own diggings."

"I should think a man might go mad from the monotony of that sort of life," commented Frank.

Jim smiled. "Why, he's in the giddy whirl of society beside the thing that happened to me. When I got up to my line of camps, I found that some poor fellow had come across the plain from Springer, New Mexico, and sickened with smallpox a few hours after he reached one of my westernmost camps. He died and was buried there. Both men in the camps on each side this one simply ran away. At the camp itself, one man had died with the smallpox, and his partner was completely broken down. There was nothing for it but to send him back to headquarters while he was still able to travel, and to keep that sign-camp the best I could while he was gone. He left a little dog with me, two greasy old packs of cards, and plenty of grub, so that, as he said, I 'ought to be as happy as a king.'

"For a week I lived there in that 'dobe, alone with the little cur. I rode across those great, dead-still levels every day and all day. I'd pull up Cinco sometimes and sit still on him, and look all around where the plain and the sky met—an unbroken line—as if the little horse and I were the only created beings. I'd go in at night, and shut the door on that awful loneliness outside, and there it would be standing between the little dog and me. I'd have given everything I was worth, for the face



to throw it all up, load my pack-mule and hit the trail for the home ranch in Jack County.

"After a week of this, I began to neglect my riding. Just the thought of those endless stretches, of that horrible loneliness waiting out there, was too much for me. I said to myself, 'Well, the cattle are mine. If they stray off my range it's nobody's business.' And so I began to sit alone day after day in that miserable little 'dobe, till I got to have queer ideas about what the dog was thinking of me. I knew well enough I'd better get up and out; but my pony's opinion had become of importance.

"In a way I realised what was happening to me — I'd seen more than one herder brought in crazy — but I couldn't make up my mind to go. I was just afraid of everything, as near as I can remember. I'd never known the feeling before, and it's been my idea of — of hell — ever since; just to be afraid — afraid of everything. Don't you —"

"Yes," agreed Rustem Bey, and several other voices murmured confirmation, Mrs. Randolph adding, "And what happened, Mr. Baxter? It's very cruel to leave you in such a situation."

"Well," returned Jim, "I got worse fast, after I quit riding. That awful loneliness of the plain had come to be a living thing that hung around the window and waited at the door. I was sitting there one morning, almost afraid to look out, longing for some sight or sound or movement, outside of myself and little stump-tailed Navahoe. The thing had narrowed down mighty close on me. I was in a sort of nightmare.

"Suddenly, Navahoe growled away down in his

throat, and the hair rose on his head and neck, as the door darkened. I looked up and saw standing in it a great big man, six feet two if he was an inch. He was well dressed, but his feet were bare and he had no hat on. He came striding over to me and caught me by the shoulder; put his hand on my head, pushed it back and stared in my face. 'Why, it's a man!' he said; 'it's a man — it's another living man in the world!' and then he began to cry; oh, you've no idea how pitifully, the tears rolling down his big, fine, black-bearded face. And he put up his hands over his eyes and sobbed like a little child."

Jim's eyes, and all the others at the table except the Oriental ones, were suffused with sympathy. He began again.

"I was sound and clear the minute he laid his hand on me. And I saw from the first what the matter was; he had gone crazy from being lost on the plain. I got up and spoke to him, and put him in a chair, then washed his feet — poor fellow, they were all cut and scarred up. He must have taken off his shoes almost as soon as he lost his mind. I got him into my bed, finally. He was in a high fever, and he kept saying over and over to himself, whenever he would look at me or feel my hands on him, 'Thank God, I'm not alone! It isn't true that I'm all alone — there's another man in this great, terrible world, and thank God, — oh, thank God — I've found him!'"

Jim paused, and there was a long sigh of interest. I looked from the faces about the table, all full of the pity of this recital, to the wrinkled face of Mrs. Randolph's butler, as he stood, decanter in hand,

preparing to fill Jim's empty glass. Like his betters, he had forgotten his society manner in the thrill of this relation. His dark old face was drawn with emotion. I could fancy that, in another moment, perfectly trained servant as he was, he would ask, "And what then, sir? did the man get well?"

Jim's voice took up the thread of the story. "I tended on that poor soul three weeks. I shall always know what makes mothers love little helpless children so. This man was a fine fellow, and young; he must have been handsome, in health, and — and — winning. But he was all I had on earth — and I was all he had; and, sick, pitiful, with his mind all gone, I don't believe there ever was any one — not his sweetheart — no, not even his mother — that loved him better than I did, who tended on him that last week of his life — and never knew his name.

"He would talk to me by the hour — talk poetry. He might have been an actor, or he might have been a literary man who knew a great deal of that sort of thing. And what he said was beautiful, and just as clear as anybody's talk. But he always believed that the whole world had been swept away except himself and me, and he couldn't bear me out of his sight for a minute. Sometimes he'd wake in the night, shaking all over, and screaming my name. Then I'd make a light, and —" Jim looked around on the rapt faces, half sheepishly, half defiantly — "and hold his hand and sing to him, till he'd go to sleep again."

"And you never knew who he was?" asked young Mrs. Randolph.

"No," returned Jim, "I tried, every way, to find

out his name, but it was no use. He couldn't remember it, he said."

"And what —" began the Turkish minister's private secretary, whose eyes, with their beautiful look of impersonal kindness, had never left Jim's face, and never showed sign of the emotion which suffused those of his Anglo-Saxon neighbours.

Jim nodded, understandingly, and answered, "It was this way: One night he'd been so wild and scared that I hadn't slept at all, with working over him. At daybreak he fell asleep like a baby, and looked better than I'd ever seen him. I was outside, getting a little breakfast, when I heard him call me — soft, and different. I jumped up and ran in, ready to say, 'God bless you, old man!' The minute I laid eyes on him I knew I was right, that he was rational; and the next minute, when I'd got across the room and caught him as he pitched forward — that he was dead."

There was a long silence after this, and then came Mrs. Randolph's voice, pleasant, composed, from the foot of the table. "What did you do, Mr. Baxter? I have often wondered what one would do under such circumstances."

Jim looked a trifle abashed. "The first thing I did," he answered, "was to burst out crying over him, and cry like a baby. Then I managed to strip away some planks from one end of the room where there had been an attempt to ceil it, and make him a coffin, and dress him, and lay him away."

"I give you my word it was the most heart-shaking experience a man could have. The relief might come to me at any hour — it might never come at all. I might be left to die as he had, there

on the plain. But I made up my mind, as I filled in his grave and piled the great stones over it, that I would not stay at the sign-camp. I would get my saddle from the house, put it on my pony, and I would never go back inside those four walls again. And as I got to the door with the saddle in my arms, I saw Allen and the others riding up."

There was a little murmur of relief over this conclusion. The Turkish minister required enlightenment on several points of the story; and in the interval I had an opportunity once more to talk to Frank.

"You and Miss Salem are going back to New York together, I believe?" he said, smilingly.

"That is the understanding," I replied. "Mr. DeWitt was kind enough to offer to give me the management of that projected Washington Bureau for social news. That would make me a permanency here, you know."

We were going into the parlours now. Frank's sunny mood was not ruffled by this suggestion. "You look it," he laughed. "You look like the head of a news bureau. Just glance over there, and see if I am not right. I should take you to be about sixteen, and a frivolous young heart-breaker into the bargain."

I looked impulsively, and saw again the fresh-lipped, dewy-eyed, apotheosized Carrington West, in her rosy, flowing draperies and shining ornaments. Truly, the conducting of news bureaus was far from my thoughts then.

"Are you two crystal gazing?" asked a soft, sonorous voice behind us, and we turned to find young Tewfik regarding us with that countenance

too sweet for simple gravity, and too impassive to be called a smile.

"I promised Miss West that you should read her hand, Tewfik," suggested Frank.

"Miss West's hand, like my own," returned Mr. Tewfik, spreading abroad his slender, olive-hued fingers, "is an excellent one for the typewriter. She will strike out a fortune from the machine."

"It needs not a prophet, nor one returned from the dead to tell us that," laughed Frank. "All the office is saying so — and the public as well."

Mr. Tewfik looked at my hands, and shook his head. "Your destiny is in them, Miss West," he declared.

I fancied that he alluded to the palm, and held the hand palm uppermost before him.

"No," he said, "I can read what I can read from the backs or the finger tips, as from the palm. Your destiny is in them. With what courage you will conquer it, we shall see."

As we turned to the table where young Mrs. Randolph and Jim sat looking over some photographs of Western scenery, Frank observed in an apologetic undertone to me that Mr. Tewfik had been commonplace and unconvincing.

I did not think so, but when he added, "I want him to show you the really remarkable things he can do," I made no objection.

"Can you show Miss West a face in a crystal, Tewfik?" he asked. "She is, as you say, a writer. Such a thing will have a double interest for her."

"I have no crystal here," replied the Turk, quietly, "but I will find something." He took from under the pile of Western views, with the assured

touch of one who might have placed it there, a round glass paper-weight of the sort which holds a photograph. He slipped out the picture, drew from his bosom a dull green silk handkerchief, and setting the clear bubble of glass upon it, bade me look therein and behold.

"If those in whom you are most strongly interested are present while you gaze into a crystal," he explained, in that soft, bell-like monotone of his, "you may get the face of one about whom you are not especially concerned, but who is thinking of you."

I gazed obedient. There was only a bit of clear glass, taking greenish reflections from the silk beneath it. Then a face began to grow in the bubble's heart, nebulous, shadowy. At first, it appeared to me the reflected face of Francis Randolph, who stood at my side. I glanced toward him to say so, and when I turned back, up from the depths of the crystal looked the eyes of Bushrod Floyd, not as I had ever seen them, but speaking unutterable reproach into mine.

As the face faded, Mr. Tewfik observed, gently, "There is a letter."

Disquieted and off my guard, I exclaimed incautiously, "Oh, yes, I had one from him yesterday," and then shrank before the absurd naïveté of the speech, and the round of laughter that followed it.

"It is not the letter you received from him yesterday, nor yet that which you shall get from him tomorrow," pursued Mr. Tewfik meditatively. "This which makes itself known to me, is a letter yet to be written. It will come to you sometime in the future, it will come to you — he paused, glanced quietly

about him, saw that we were unobserved, dropped his right hand and, without looking, picked up that of Francis Randolph. With an inconspicuous movement, he put it forward to me, palm uppermost, and concluded, "It will come to you by this hand."

With this surprising and unlikely assertion, he closed his prognostications.

I had been aware from the first that no one saw what I saw in the crystal. Frank could not know whose letter he was bespoken to bring to me. But the smiling assurance with which he accepted the suggestion that he should at any time bring any man's letter to me, showed the blissfulness of his mood to be proof against ordinary shocks.

People were coming in to the reception which followed the dinner, and it was a relief to turn from Mr. Tewfik's enigmatic revelations to some of the personages Frank desired me to meet.

But the face in the crystal haunted me. It was more real before my eyes, during a part of the time, than the faces of the people I met. I longed to question Mr. Tewfik about it.

Yet when, in the course of the evening, I found him for a moment at my side, I merely asked him what make of typewriter he used.

He informed me gravely that his machines had been specially built for the Turkish government, at one of the large factories, and set, one with Turkish, and one with Arabic characters.

There fell a little silence, I thinking, I am sure, of nothing but the incongruity of so Occidental and modern a contrivance as a typewriter being furnished with Arabic letters — those characters in which



the Koran of Mohammed was written by Zeid, the prophet's amanuensis.

Mr. Tewfik sat regarding me with that full, unembarrassed, unembarrassing gaze of his. "You ask me when," he said finally.

I knew he alluded to the letter, and I nodded. I had not asked him in words, but it was the thing which, earlier in the evening, I had put mentally into a thousand forms of question.

"It will be in the autumn time."

"It is a strange way for a letter to come," I hazarded, finally. "Are you sure? Where shall I be, that one of my friends should send me a letter by the hand of another?"

"You will be in New York," began Mr. Tewfik, and I laughed easily.

"Both of those friends live in New York, and so do I. We meet, almost daily, in the same office. It would be very singular about that letter."

Mr. Tewfik bowed sedately, as one who agreed that life was indeed strange, and the ways of men past finding out. He would have offered no further explanation, but that I asked him. He came out of a little fit of abstraction, during which I had been talking to Frank, and to a Western man Frank had brought to present, to answer me.

"I beg pardon — oh, the letter," he replied. "He who writes it will have gone upon a journey. He will not then be living in New York. He who delivers it —"

Mr. Tewfik was called upon by some one near for a bit of information. He gave it, turned to me, and repeated, "He who delivers the letter —" when it was signified to him that Ali Rustem Bey was

departing, and desired his attendance. My heart had stood still to listen for the conclusion of that sentence. In it seemed to be the kernel of such information as he had given me. As he made his grave adieu to me, I felt an almost uncontrollable impulse to hold fast his hand and beg him, who had told me so much — so much which seemed like living truth to me — to tell me only a little more.

I looked after his tall retreating back, when he went to make his devoirs to his hostess, and my eyes were hot. I could have caught at his vanishing robe hem — represented just then by the most correct of evening dress — and bidden him stay for one word.

Later, Frank found time and place to tell me that I was not only the most gifted and brilliant woman he knew, but the most beautiful; not only the chosen companion of his spirit, but the delight of his eyes. He added, with a little touch of reproach, that his enjoyment of the evening would have been perfect, if he might have announced our engagement — privately, at least, to his own family.

He was, however, in a mood so celestial that he forbore to urge this, and only begged that he might write his mother, and get for me a ring which, as she had always said, was for his wife.

I demurred laughingly, and advised that he wait till it should be proved that our present halcyon season was more enduring than such seasons had been in the past.

But, in the retrospect, that evening meant for me Mr. Tewfik and his uncompleted revelations; and I said to Miss Salem as we drove home together that



I hardly thought it the proper thing for people to have a young man loaded up with facts like that concerning futures, prowling about at a dinner-party.

## CHAPTER XIV.

### The Lord's Freeman

"Not till men are made of some other metal than earth.  
Would it not grieve a woman to be overmastered by a piece  
of valiant dust? To make account of her life to a clod of  
wayward marl?"

I HAD finished the Washington matter (cursing my evil star, which was surely in the ascendant when I begged for so much of it), and had got back to New York. Work on the great book was resumed. Frank was still in an angelic mood. He would have let me off for as much as a week; but I, being something of an angel myself, insisted upon making long days.

Indeed, I found it my best defence. To the future I would not look. For the present, this book work kept sentiment somewhat in abeyance, and Frank excellently contented. There were long, happy mornings in which we scarcely quarrelled at all. There were brief skirmishes, whose reconciliations appeared to more than make up (to Frank at least) for any pain they caused.

For my part, alas! the scar was always left by them. They prophesied to me ultimate defeat, or the rending of this bond which had become so dear to me.

One morning, when he had welcomed me eagerly, he added that I was hardly ever out of his thoughts.

"Since the first day I met you until this moment, Cara," he said, "you have been the supreme idea to me most of the time, and the undercurrent always."

I did not tell him how nearly this had been true with myself, but only answered that it was sweet to hear him say so.

"I look back to that day," he went on; "think of it, dearest, twelve golden hours! If we had them now — twelve beautiful hours — all to ourselves, in which we should not quarrel, nor apprehend, nor doubt — it would be a lifetime of joy, wouldn't it? With a week of such days as that, I should be a Methuselah of bliss."

"Oh, yes," I answered, "but where will you find the days in which we shall not quarrel?"

"Right here — now, and in the future, till we live to be a hundred."

"I am afraid you refuse to learn by experience, Frank," I said, a little sadly.

"But it will be different," he urged. "To a man who has not worn his heart upon his sleeve, this sudden tide of sentiment was well-nigh painful. It was certainly unwelcome and disquieting."

"I found it so," I answered.

"But we have had time to think it over, and we shall never disagree, if only you will bear in mind, young lady, that nobody is going to eat you up — no matter how much they may feel inclined to."

"I wonder," I said, "if you are experiencing now that remarkable emotion which you defined to me that day on the train as love. I must think to the contrary, for you were going to love the person

in that case, whatever she was, whatever she did, and you have always been intent only on making poor me over."

"Indeed, no," he murmured, fondly. "I would not have one atom of you changed. I should myself be in some awe of you if I did not know what a very woman you are — how clinging, how dependent, how timid, how in reality you love to be dictated to. It is your kaleidoscopic inconsistency which gives me courage. I am best pleased when I find you so brilliantly and femininely unreasonable."

I sighed impatiently. I wished he would go away and find the girl who corresponded with this description, for surely it was not I. Our reconciliation meant, it seemed to me, only a renewal of torture. "Floating islands of the night, shouting lies to each other through the blackness and across the sliding water," I misquoted as I went down the stairs.

Then, in the midst of my worries, came Mr. DeWitt with the very natural suggestion that, as I had done Washington so well for the syndicate, I go to Boston, and, as he phrased it, "do the same trick."

At first I was aghast. Then, after a week more of Frank and the book, I said to myself, "I will go anywhere. I will do anything. I will take in cross-ings to sweep for my living — anything but this."

I came down to the studio the morning after reaching this point, afraid to tell my partner, yet knowing it must be done.

"I think I will not write this morning, Frank," I remarked, standing by the table, and musing over

my manuscript. "I have been neglecting my regular work too much of late. I should plan out my new series, and to do that I must go home and be alone."

"I wish you would not think any more about the new series. I want to plan that for you," he answered, sweetly.

I must have looked astonished and somewhat frightened, for he added, laughing a little, "You need not accept my plans after I make them, you know; but, Cara, it grieves me to see you worrying over such things."

"I am not worrying," I answered, "I never worry. The work comes to me in just the way it ought, when I have to do it."

"There are some things," Frank went on, "about which I think my advice will be of more use to you than that of a fellow writer — or a writer fellow. I get the point of view of the general public — the average reader."

"Mr. DeWitt gives me that," I said, incautiously. "He is an ideal editor." I saw the old look, the jealous darkening of the face, and knew that I had offended again.

"I wish you would give up the work, at once," said Frank finally, "and go home — to Texas — till you are willing to let me come for you. You will have to give it up sometime, you know."

It had come at last, the challenge I had been expecting. I must answer it.

"Frank — oh, Frank, dear," I said earnestly, "look at it a minute. You would never ask me to sacrifice anything material for you — my hair, a hand, an arm, any physical member — my life itself — but —"

Frank gazed on me in amazement. "Cara!" he cried, "what on earth —"

But I interrupted, "No, hear me out. I say you would not ask of me — as proof of my love, as a tribute to your power over me, and an adornment of your triumphal progress through life — the sacrifice of any of my members, or of my life itself. But, Frank, dear, consider, what of the soul? What of its life and welfare? If you take from it its precious labours and activities, if you shear and lop and rob it, shall —"

"But does not love" — he began, with shining eyes.

"Frank," I said, "my work is my soul's health and dignity. These talents that have been given to me — these talents that it is death to hide — you would have lodged with me useless. It would be all one to me, if you possessed millions of dollars. To my thought — my understanding — there is no way of making life good and clean and satisfactory, but by each day earning the right to be here. Only so — only after thus much — would happiness be possible to me."

"A woman's home, is not that her sphere?" questioned Frank. "Cannot she find work there — employment for her powers?"

"Well, say we were to have a home," I conceded, "a home, a place for us two to live in; to rest and be acquainted with each other, and be happy in; should it usurp the larger activities of either of us? I shall not cook its food nor scrub its floors nor wash its windows, any more than you perform the equivalent of these labours at the office. My real work —"



"The work — the work —" Frank repeated in a dazed tone — "You can't give up your work? You need it to make you happy? Why, dearest, haven't I told you that you have touched me with heaven's own fire, made of me a better, a larger, as well as a happier man? If you believe me but ordinarily grateful for such a boon as that, you must see that I shall wish always to make your happiness. Happy? The angels will envy us!"

To be put in a heaven — oh, to be fairly chased into it — and told sharply, by inference at least, to stay there now, like a lady, while somebody made my happiness for me! He had not understood one word of my appeal. He might as well not have heard it. Should I try once more? Should I press the truth upon him till I saw all the love and tenderness — driven by bewildered resentment — leave his face, to be followed by the look I knew, the set-to of bitterness, of arrogant and unbending will, that finds no limit to tyrannical demand and exaction? Why not just pass the issue? Fate would take care of it for me, one way or the other, soon. It would make its own conclusion, inevitably, yes, or no, and that quickly. Why not, just for a few minutes, leave the cup of sweetness at my lips? — the cup my presaging soul told me it would never be mine to drain? So I only said, weakly, "Oh, heaven is such a solemn place I should never have the face to be happy there."

"Ah, but we are going to laugh in our heaven," comforted Frank.

"I don't believe I would suit heaven, I am too faulty," I persisted.

"The dear little touch of human failing! It is

what encourages me about you. Of course you are an angel. Of course I have to look up to you, wrapped in cloud, high above me. The little faults — or things which you call faults — are almost my only hope. I really mean it, love. It is like having you slip your dear white hand down into the clouds a bit, and whisper 'Where's Frank?' Here he is, honey, always reaching a hand to climb to you — my hope, my inspiration."

This was not the kind of speech, you would have said, to force me into the open, to thrust me into the honest, courageous course. Certainly, it was not what I had weakly looked forward to as furnishing the inevitable call for a solution. But Truth's messengers arrive by various roads, and she knows many and curious ways to compel us to her service.

And so it was, that this lover's speech of Frank's seemed to show me the hopeless difference in our points of view. Having failed to be brave and resolute when I ought, I must now be harsh and offensive.

"I never asked," I said doggedly, "to be anybody's hope and inspiration. I am not requiring somebody to be a hope and inspiration to me, and if I were I should not get it. Your idea which appeals to you so much is, to be to me a kind of extinguisher, a sort of grand quietus."

"Cara!" in a tone of horror.

"Oh, I may as well say it. You know I'm thinking it all the time. If I were in your place I should not want anybody about me full of rebellion and anger and despair; but you seem to think that, so long as I do not say —"

Frank rose, white with wrath. He came over and

laid a steady hand upon my shaking one, which gripped the pencil.

"Say it," he told me. "Never pause for wounding a heart that is all your own. Never halt for trampling on the most ardent, tender, fond emotions of a man's — Oh, women are all alike!" and he flung my hand aside and strode over to the window.

I looked at his back as he stood there, and drew my breath sharply. I had been asked to speak, and speak I would. No thing should now be left unsaid.

"In the first place," I began, "I want the privileges of a mere human being."

"You do not appear to appreciate the superiority of being held above the ruck of humanity, regarded as an angel."

"No, I do not," I went on steadily. "Angels never get their dues. Who would think of paying a debt to an angel? We all understand that there are no pockets in angels' robes. They are not expected to get or keep anything for themselves."

"And so, when I call you an angel," commented Frank, with something very like a sneer, "it is because I grudge you everything?"

"Yes, it is. You grudge me the least breath of freedom, and that is everything. I am to have for my life, for my body and brain and soul, nothing, except what comes through you. When are you going to give up *your* work?"

"Ah, but that is different," ejaculated Frank, almost kindly, turning and coming toward me. "Don't you see I am to work for us both? My work matters to me now, because it is for you — all for you; every dollar, every bit of fame, just for Carita."

I think he was honestly deceived in the matter, I believe most men are; yet his words left me cold, and a little angry. "You would be very foolish if that were true, Frank — but it is not," I said. "You just think it is. You were absorbed and happy in your work before you ever saw me. Talk about every dollar you make being for sake of her you love, then let your wife take you at your word and attempt to dole back to you an allowance, and listen to the explosion that would follow!"

"You sordid little wretch!" exclaimed Frank, laughing. The hopeless thing was that, unless I wounded and made him angry, he would never take me seriously. "How dare you talk about allowances between you and me? I see, honey, that you are going to stipulate for special terms — mixing up finance and love — it is like money-changers in the temple!"

I felt the futility of my brief rebellion. I felt that no one thing I had said had been the right thing. I laid down the manuscript abruptly, thrust my pencil into my hair, and remarked in as calm a tone as I could command, "I am going over to Boston for a week or two. Mr. DeWitt has given me a commission there. I am going to say good-bye to you now, Frank, and go to-night."

Frank's pale face flushed with anger, and his eyes took on their stern look, as he said, "There! Now you see why I object to your work. Any man, any fool, can order you about and send you places, while I have no word to say."

There were a very great many answers I could have made to this remark. The things it gave me privilege to say piled up before my mental vision as

quite a library of argument and reproach. Time, however, would have permitted the rehearsing of comparatively few of them, and I had ever an objection to accepting an abridged privilege; so I said quite another thing from any of them.

It was, "I am going to Boston because I want to. If I did not like the commission, I should not accept it. I never take things I do not want," and I was hastening, shaken with angry emotion, out of the room, when Frank intercepted me at the door.

"You know this is final, do you?" he demanded, almost menacingly. "You understand, of course, that I would not endure such words as that from any woman, no matter what I felt for her."

"Then let it be so — let it be!" I cried, between weariness and anger and shame. "It would better, God knows. I —"

There was no voice to say more. I could have sunk under my sense of humiliation. After all my clear understanding of the matter, my resolution to make it plain to Frank, my grief at the fear — almost a certainty — that the tie which was so painfully sweet and dear to me was doomed to be broken — for all this, it was not in dignified calmness, whatever the sorrow, but in an angry quarrel, that the precious, impossible bond had been rent.

My regret and self-reproach were bitter, and I fairly quailed beneath them. As I gazed speechlessly at Frank, who had, I knew, all his own stern heart could support of pain and disappointment, he mistook my drooping attitude, and caught willingly at the supposed repentance. His look softened beautifully upon me. He stretched out his hands to me with an inarticulate murmur:

“ My little wilful sweetheart — oh, Carita — little creature — ”

“ No, no! ” I whispered chokingly. And tearing my heart away from those compelling, beseeching eyes, I hurried out and down the stairs.

## CHAPTER XV.

### A Doctor of Philosophy

**"The tender mercies of the wicked are cruel."**

THE point of view of each human creature must necessarily be his own.

I put this in the form of an announcement — a statement — rather than as a suggestion or remark, because I have observed widely and studiously in the matter, and all my observations have proved this to be true. I perceive that persons may be so destitute that they must beg from others all the necessities of life, so impoverished that no sheriff's writ, no search-warrant, could discover a vestige of means, of assets; but this one bit of portable property is inalienable, and the bankrupt or the beggar is seized and possessed of his own personal, individual point of view, equally with the bishop, the senator, and the millionaire.

And I have seen, also, that two people of much the same general size and shape, the same class socially, working side by side in the greatest amity, at the same undertaking, will regard the whole matter from points of view as widely separate and dissimilar as can well be.

All this was suggested by my conversation with Mr. DeWitt the afternoon before I went to Boston.

When he had — with his usual cleverness, brevity, and perspicacity — delivered all instructions and suggestions necessary, and was satisfied that I had them properly sorted and packed in my mental portmanteau, Mr. DeWitt relaxed and addressed me upon the social plane. His touch was light and correct (though Mr. DeWitt's years were few if any beyond my own, as a citizen of the world I was ever, beside him, a gawky infant); and, pleased, I produced in response some of the many things which happened to Miss Salem and me while I was in Washington. I thought us such an odd pair, like the soda and the sour of baking-powder, walking around hand in hand, ready to make things rise.

"You appear to have seen a good deal of Priscilla Salem," he suggested.

"I did," I answered. "We were together almost continually, when I wasn't busy; and you know I spent the last week at her apartments."

"A good opportunity for you," he observed.

"Wasn't it?" I agreed. "I believe if anything could reform me, and make a man of me, Miss Salem's companionship would do it. She is one of the loveliest women I ever met."

"She holds more stock than the president, in the concern you are working for," supplied my editor, with that little suspicion of a sneer which I hate, hovering about his lips.

"I am not working for any concern," I said sharply.

"But for —" he interrogated, with those coolly raised brows which always drove me to say foolish things.

"For undying fame," I rejoined shortly. "And



incidentally, for bread and butter. For your approval, or that of the janitor, or any other honest man who reads and cares for my stuff."

"I am afraid that you are impractical," sighed my mentor. "A week in Priscilla Salem's house, and no axe ground! I should have been trembling for my own position — I know that every time I change your punctuation, or say you use too many adjectives, you feel sure I am incompetent, and that you could fill the place better." And he laughed genially at the guilty assenting blush which silently answered him.

But I went back to that hateful thought. "I shall not let myself care," I cried, "if you have said she is worth three-quarters of a million. Why should I? I knew that before. She is fine and true, and one of the most companionable creatures I ever met, notwithstanding, and — and she and I are full partners!"

"You are!" he echoed, with a hint of unflattering surprise, then leaned his head on his hand and considered me thoughtfully for five minutes.

"No, you don't know how to grind an axe at all, do you? Here you have been actually a member of Miss Salem's household for weeks, and seem to have turned it to no account whatever."

"To what earthly account could I try to turn it?" I inquired.

"Just this," he answered, "you write well enough — you know that yourself — you know we think so here. With her influence, you could have simply anything that's going."

"God pity the rich!" I burst out, "to whom is denied even a little honest liking from the stranger

within their gates; and whose own kin — now that you remind me of the conditions — must, I see, wish them dead three times a day.”

“Oh, come now, come,” remarked Mr. DeWitt. “That is put with your usual force and felicity; but we’re not in a sketch. This is mere reality. Just tell me, don’t you know that woman’s a power in this office?”

“Well, so am I,” I returned, and flourished out of it, taking my point of view along with me, leaving (very gladly) Mr. DeWitt’s there with him.

But that was in New York. When I had been in Boston less than a week, it would have been stating it very mildly to say there was no strut or bravado left in me. In West Texas, girls had not been plenty. They were the most welcome and desired citizens, treated with much favour and partiality.

My sensations in Boston were those of a spoiled and petted only child, accustomed to attention and consideration, who goes — upon an evil day — to visit in some relative’s family, where children are overplentiful, and deprecated, not to say despised. To such a child in such a household, the mere ordinary round of its life, without any special accident or outbreak, is a continual pain and wounding; yea, he is killed all the day long.

Miss Salem had given me some letters to her Boston friends. These made for me at once a little circle of acquaintances — all women. I found them agreeable and helpful to me, both socially and in my work. When I called to present one of these letters (it was to a cousin of Miss Salem’s, scarcely more than a girl, but a clever young doctor, and “the best and brightest of the lot,” as Mr. DeWitt said),

there were several women friends in the room; two of them were medical students in her office. One of the visitors, and a typical member of the great army of superfluous women, — indeed, it struck me that she might fairly be expected to be somewhat superfluous anywhere, — faced round upon me abruptly, and demanded:

“Why did you come here to do the work some Boston woman ought to have, to take the place she ought to fill, to take the bread out of her mouth?”

I was so astonished at her onslaught, so bewildered by her method of reasoning, that my usual levity deserted me, and I failed to make the flippant but truthful rejoinder that I came because I, and not “some Boston woman,” was wanted, and that I did not like, and could scarcely conceive of circumstances under which I should consent to eat, bread out of somebody else’s mouth.

But Doctor Thorndyke interfered in my defence, with a quiet smile, and her aggressive friend was placated. Later, I arranged to stay with the doctor, who had but just set up in a modest flat, for such time as I should be in Boston. She was a fine example of the best sort of girl bachelor, about twenty-seven years old, clever, broad-minded, a writer of good ability, of an excellent disposition, as frank and kind a friend and companion as heart could desire. When, from time to time, I came in to her, wailing aloud how bitter a thing it is to be a woman in Boston, I could never be sure whether she would chaff or sympathise. She was notably excellent at either, and I found the two methods equally agreeable and effective in soothing my hurts or diverting my mind from them. Again, she chaffed so feel-

ingly, or sympathised with such a hint of sarcasm, that I had much ado to tell t'other from which; and in my efforts to discriminate I forgot my bruises entirely.

One morning I stood waiting for my car, upon the accustomed corner, at the accustomed hour, when a good-looking, well-dressed person came up and waited near me, holding a paper in his well-kept hand. He was a handsome man — a really superior looking man; and when as I thought he regarded me approvingly, I was idly pleased thereat, and smoothed my feathers consciously. Meantime another woman stopped, and then another — both of whom were young and pretty. A car approached; this man gave us one comprehensive glance, walked almost half a block toward it, caught it before it stopped, got in, secured the only vacant seat, unfurled his paper and read serenely, leaving us suspended to the straps before him, like so many fowls dangling in a poulterer's window.

This tale I told to the doctor, in positive gloom and humiliation of spirit. She laughed, as usual, told me what she called some early lessons of her own, and concluded in her inimitable manner:

"Now, my child — my dear young Western sister — I did not tell you these things to exacerbate your already outraged feelings. Far otherwise. Look at me. I have lived through it, and grown fat upon it" (the doctor was as slender as a reed). "What does that teach you?"

"Ours is the case of any animal thrown unprepared amid new and unfavouring conditions. It must, if it is to persist, develop, we will say, a longer snout, a higher rate of speed, or grow a

new set of legs outright, in order to cope with the difficulties of its new environment.

"And they do, you know. Oh, they do; they call upon Mother Nature, or the Oversoul, or something, and she — or it — provides 'em. Oh, I assure you the legs and snouts are forthcoming. And what these creatures do in the course of a few hundred generations, you must set your wits to do at once. Grow weapons of aggression or defence, and that quickly. Either a thick skin or quick tongue — both for that matter."

"I —" I began, still complainingly.

"Well, do you care greatly?" interrupted the doctor, unexpectedly.

"N-n-no," I responded, reluctantly. "But it — well, you know, I have an ever present and crushing belief that I am an error, a mistake; nay, even worse — possibly a crime! I feel apologetic all the time. I have developed from deprecatory into abject, and —"

"Have you?" said Doctor Thorndyke, a little dryly. "Well, I should say, then, that you needed exactly what you are getting. I don't find myself very abject. You are from Texas, my child — that is, you are a spoiled baby. Stop thinking you are a woman, or worse yet 'a lady,' and be an individual — be willing to stand on your merits as a worker, a —"

"Say no more!" I cried, with a burning face. "I don't need another word. I see — I perceive — I understand."

We both laughed, and passed, with a reënforced mutual understanding, to other matters.

One evening, a little later, we were brushing out

our hair and exchanging confidences — even a successful young physician may still be woman enough, I found, to care for the alliterative relaxation of kimonas and confidences.

"And so you know Francis Randolph, do you?" inquired the doctor, drawing a shining tress meditatively through her fingers. "How long have you known him?"

"Ever since I came to New York," I answered. "I met him on my way up. It was —"

The doctor turned her clear eyes on me, and I finished hastily, "a remarkable coincidence," and my face flushed annoyingly.

"Um-m, yes; and you are the very sort of girl Francis Randolph would fancy," she went on, quietly. "Most people would not say so; but you are."

"I believe you are mistaken," I returned. "I have hardly any of the qualities he commends in woman. He told me once about his ideal woman, and I am just diametrically op—"

The doctor burst out laughing. "Oh, of course!" she agreed. "He thinks he admires a tender, clinging, modest-violet sort of creature — who would drive him to drink and destruction from pure weariness and disgust, within a year."

"He *thinks*?" I suggested, rather diffidently. "Why do you say that? Why shouldn't he *know* what he wants? I do."

"I doubt it," returned the doctor. "Women have a little more self-knowledge than men; but I'll venture a guess that you are thinking, about now, that Frank Randolph is an ideal sort of fellow — you would be likely to, if he fancies you."

"Oh, but I don't!" I broke in. "I lo— like him immensely; but I find him overbearing, crude, and narrow. He is strong—almost cruelly strong; clear-headed, resolute; and he has fine gifts. Where he is indifferent—I mean where that bitter pride of self-mastery and invincibleness has not been aroused or challenged—he has the most perfect, the most graceful and charming bearing I have ever known. He—it seems to me that, in this humour, he would be—I mean it seriously—irresistible to any one he desired to make love him."

"Yes," said the doctor, "I quite agree there."

"But it would be a woman of childish mind, or a slavish nature, or one lacking knowledge and experience, who would yield to the emotion, once she knew him a little."

The doctor only nodded.

"He ought to be everything fine and admirable and desirable," I went on. "He has it all in him. But it is obscured by a strange sort of ancient ignorance, arrogance, wilful blindness; and a capacity for serene tyranny that ought to appal any girl."

"Go on," prompted the doctor, as I paused.

"Well, it has always seemed to me that if he could be brought to see these faults they would drop away from him; but that is what I find in him, now. I am afraid life would have to do terrible things to him before he would be what he thinks himself now—ready to 'make a woman's happiness.'"

Then I saw what I had admitted; but there was no going back.

"Bravo!" cried the doctor. "You are worth saving. I see how it is, and I would not have believed that any girl of your age could have brought

so much level-headed common sense away from close contact with Francis Randolph's fascination. I don't see why you are not the girl for him, after all!"

"Oh, no," I murmured. "We quarrel all the time. He wants me made over into something else — into the kind of person that I should loathe."

"And that he would, too," put in the doctor.

"Do you think so?" I debated.

"Certainly," she maintained. "That is a masculine characteristic, and it runs particularly strong in men of unusual force. I have a theory on the subject — I have on most subjects. You see it is like this: There is a certain set of traits which a man admires in a woman; which he really admires, I mean, though he may not himself know it. These traits he wishes to see in their full perfection in the woman he loves; so he picks out a girl who makes a good showing of them, and he begins unconsciously to test her for them."

"That sounds awfully cool-headed," I laughed. "Maybe they fall in love that way in Boston; but down South — in Texas —"

"Oh, he doesn't do it consciously," she interrupted. "It is purely subjective. And subjective movements, in such matters, are all that count. There speaks the soul itself. Take your own case as an example. Mr. Randolph really — in the depths of his being, and unknown to himself — admires, above all else, intellect and force and independence in a woman — the capacity to guide her own life, and the resolution to do so. He thinks he does not, but he does. And, unknown to himself, he is continually encroaching, to find whether you have



enough of the strength which he admires, to withstand him — the independence and force which he really loves, to resent his overbearing attitude and live your own life in spite of him. If you have them, if you can do that, can hold your own with him, he'll adore you for ever. Selah! I have spoken.

"I told you I had theories to fit all cases; but I never give an ounce of advice. I diagnose, you see; but I don't prescribe. So you need not be frightened. Good night!" and she was gone.

I had, of course, no word from Frank.

Miss Bucks's letters were unexpectedly delightful. Why the delight should have been unexpected, I can scarcely say. She possessed a wonderfully terse, direct, forcible style, which had always, to my thinking, sat upon her "Fashions and Fancies" with the appropriateness of a suit of chain mail on a ballet dancer. She was not, however, writing *Fashions and Fancies* to me, and I had the full benefit of an epistolary manner so brief and trenchant that it omitted all mention of Frank.

Starved upon a diet of her letters, two brief official communications from Mr. DeWitt, a note from Miss Salem, and the fattest of round robins from the Corcorans, I finally made myself believe it would be quite the thing to write to Bushrod. I had had letters from him while I was in Washington — why was it not just courteous and proper for me to answer?

And in less than half an hour after I arrived at this dishonest conclusion, I went in to lunch and found beside my plate a tiny envelope, only a size bigger than a visiting-card.

It did contain a card, and upon it was written in Bushrod Floyd's dainty chirography —

“ There was once a very foolish man, who had a foolish way  
Of looking for a letter, every day — Oh, every day !  
He almost fainted at what time he heard the postman's call ;  
And when that letter never came — just never came at all —  
He fell on heavy pondering (he was foolish past belief)  
If folks perish just of longing, and if many die of grief ?  
Oh, when no letter *ever* came, this man his heart was sore ;  
He said in bitterness of soul he'd never look no more.  
Would he not ? He's looking — looking — looking for it still.  
His life is just an empty place that nothing else can fill ! ”

There was no signature, but I felt I held in my hand the key to the difficulty. Bushrod had written me twice while I was in Washington — I actually *owed* him a letter. What more natural than that I should write him ?

It is one of the proofs of the evil of such a passion as then ruled my heart, blind, overbearing, imperious, that it makes those who experience it cruel to all other suffering because of their own.

Any right-minded person, who had read poor Bushrod Floyd's verse, would certainly have spared him, and, having nothing to offer, would have let him alone.

But I was scarcely a right-minded person. I feverishly put aside this clear, kind view of the case, calling it nonsense, conceit, vanity. I told myself many plausible untruths, none of which I believed for an instant, and wrote to Bushrod.

I professed an ardent admiration for the amount of news, pictorial and otherwise, contained in the first letter he wrote to me, in Washington. I told

him all the things that had happened to me, what I had done and thought and felt — it was like what I imagined talking to one's mother would be — writing, or talking to Bushrod; so sure was one of full sympathy and understanding. I urged a present longing for full details of the office doings. I inferentially held out hopes of other and better letters to follow, if this were promptly replied to.

And I received, in just four and twenty hours, a voluminous letter, of which this is a portion:

"You are as wonderful as I thought you were going to be, plus all that I did not know enough to expect in the world.

"That letter! It was an energetic thing to come from the immediate hand of the meek man who is substituting for our postman. I dote on that man. He has a bad eye, a bad breath, a green, greasy, lacerated coat, and he is shy one finger on the hand that holds the letters. But he was the divinely appointed factor in the transmission of your precious document. Let the breath and the finger go; he is the man for me.

"I knew by my sixth sense (which is devoted entirely to matters concerning you) from whom the missive was. I thought him outrageously cool. I wondered that he walked so slow, and I speculated that he would certainly hear my heart bouncing against my spareribs. It gave an extra tremendous bump when he handed me your letter. What riches! I could have kissed him! And as I have told you, he is a very plain man.

"I looked out of the window and trifled long with my happiness before I opened that letter. It had come by the last delivery. The sun was going down.

It could go down, and be hanged to it — I had the aurora borealis in my fist!”

After giving me various sprightly details of persons and things for which he well knew I cared little (poor Bushrod! he was of that oversensitive, over-considerate class which would hand a blind man the morning paper to convince him that his affliction had not been remarked) — after all this, he said:

“Just as I finished giving it its seventeenth reading, Frank came in; and, for the first time in our lives, he seemed to me a common, unsuccessful sort of person; and poor — he had no letter from you. I hasten to add here, that this observation was no intrusion upon private, personal affairs. He who runs may read. There could be no mistake made. Nobody could look at Frank’s face and not understand at once that he has no letter from you.

“Ah, next to your dear self, which is surely best of all created things, is a letter from you.”

That was all, but it made me wish — What? What? That I had not written? No, hardly just that. Well, then, the wish being indefinite, the tears it brought to my eyes and the ache it left in my heart were concrete enough.

## CHAPTER XVI.

### As Solomon Says

"Stay me with flagons, comfort me with apples, for I am sick of love."

I WAS about to say that just before I went to Boston there came a new boarder to our house.

But to say so would not be to state the thing with impartial truthfulness. He did not board with us at all, he was only our constant visitor, to speak frankly, our sister's beau, this young man.

When I came to live with the Corcorans, he and Miss Phyllis were in the acute stage which has hot fits and cold fits and intermissions. Now their engagement was announced, and the young man had become chronic.

They intended to be married some time and go to live in Mexico, where he had an uncle, and where it was thought he would "do well."

Meantime, he brought to our house many volumes of travel, Mexican guide-books, Spanish lexicons, and phrase-books. Every evening after dinner, he and she mingled their tresses over these studies, which included much whispering and giggling, and a very little Spanish.

I could not know when I came so gaily and gladly to dwell in this pleasant little home that it was soon



to shelter a pair of blissful engaged lovers. Would I have come if I had so known? Would I have remained away? Who can say? Of what avail to escape one such pair when the street-cars, the ferries, the offices, homes, highways and byways were alive, in short, the whole world was swarming with them?

I was singularly haunted and beset. For some time I sought vainly the explanation of my strange prepossession — this thing which I called a sending of young lovers. No need to ask what enemy had sent it; there is a state of mind which renders one clairvoyant to similar conditions in others. This talisman draws to him who carries it (whether hidden or worn openly) knowledge and sight of others in that same brotherhood of pain, until the whole world seems to be initiate, its membership throbbing with his ache, failing with his failure, or taunting his lack with its perfect fulfilment.

There was our cook. Now a cook, you would say, might reasonably be expected to be fat and red-faced.

Not if she cooked where I lived. No; not if I boarded where she cooked. Ours was young and good-looking, and she had a young man who knew this, and was much pleased about it.

The waitress was also pretty, and she and her beau, when they went out of a Sunday afternoon, were an ecstatic and devoted pair.

But the waitress next door was the prettiest creature on the block. She had curly red hair, a saucy nose, and great, deep Irish blue eyes; and so fair as she, so deep in love was the grocer's young

man, who was also her young man. My window overlooked their bit of flag-walked and velvet-swarded back yard, commonly the theatre of their little love scenes, her coquetries, and his protestations.

As I walked along the street (brooding, maybe, over a heartache, but intent upon my own business, and I do protest, harming no one), fond couples came around corners and met me face to face, or overtook and passed me — hurrying to leave mankind and escape to the blissful solitude of their own society. And if I went into an office, even for a moment, the bookkeeper would instantly forsake his desk to go and lean over the stenographer, who replied to his fond glances with glances as fond.

Those, our own young lovers, the sister of the house and her swain, were Phyllis and Corydon in the flesh. Oh, they were “plumb symbolical,” as Jim said. And I had them, like the poor, always with me.

I was not — indeed, and in good faith I was not — sour, nor crusty, nor cynical, nor envious. I bore the sight of their fond looks, their sweet obliviousness to all the outer world, at all sorts of odd hours of the day and several evenings a week, without a murmur of cheap witticism. They were, both of them, pretty and agreeable, and I liked them. I wished them all possible joy, and rejoiced for them that their engagement was to be a long one, that they might yet for months — even years — wait in this sweet vestibule, which was made fair and beautiful with all hope and trust, warmed and irradiated by the great sun which shines in the sacred hall beyond; that they might still sing this tender and

harmonious prelude and walk about in this soft and lovely Beulah, holding each other's hands, looking in each other's eyes, where all wine is nectar, all music harmony, all airs balmy, all thought rapture.

But I did think it pretty hard, when the weather was bad, and when what the little red-haired waitress next door, with whom I had scraped acquaintance that I might learn the secret of her perennial bliss, called "the Littra-cher business" was dull and a burden, while Frank still looked at me with alien eyes, and the key of the little studio rusted unused in my jacket pocket, that my homesick and overwrought heart should be so persistently flouted, as it were, and affronted by the sight of their clean-swept, cut-and-dried, set-in-order felicity, and made to feel with poor Orlando, "What a bitter thing it is to look into happiness through another man's eyes."

In all this swelling chorus of love and dove, of bliss and kiss, and eyes and sighs, and wiles and smiles, poor Genevieve alone struck a minor chord.

When I came back to New York, I found that my Boston work had been giving special satisfaction.

I had a bit of extra matter with me — not to shirk the truth, it was verse — I had called it —

A LITERARY LOVELACE.

I will not think me light that I  
Amend me of my pain,  
Turning, with cheeks but lately dry,  
To smile at life again.

Sure, a new sweetheart now I woo,  
The fickle charmer Fame;  
And seek, synthetically, to know  
What goes to make a name.



This is inconstancy, yet still  
Yourself will own, I know,  
I could not woo her half so well  
Had I not loved you so.

So ran the rhyme which Mr. DeWitt was pleased to commend as warmly as even I thought it deserved. It turned out later that he was in one of what I had come to call his melting moods.

"That's all, then?" I said, as I rose and gathered my belongings for departure; when "Let me keep this till to-morrow," fell in dulcet tones upon my ear, and Mr. DeWitt covered the bit of verse with his hand, delivering pointblank at me what a Fiji Islander would have recognised as a languishing glance.

But I was looking for business, not sentiment, and in my impenetrable stupidity, I could not see anything else.

"Why, no!" I shouted, in alarm, "I'll need that to-night if I am to get it in shape for the next issue."

I had reached the door before the curious, abashed look with which he huffily handed it over, and his ruffled silence, began to be significant to me. He had been at leisure, in an expansive humour, and had thought to do a little casual philandering for my behoof and his own amusement. The sudden enlightenment struck me rigid.

"Here," I said loudly, wheeling and presenting the thing at arm's length, "you keep it if you want to; I can use the rough draft to work over. I beg your pardon. I didn't realise that you wanted to be sentimental about it."

He looked at me dangerously, and I added with

kind generosity, "It is never my way, and you know it, to spoil a bit of practice like that."

"Go away, you unspeakable barbarian," he answered, a little fiercely — but he was laughing.

So I went. But outside the door something stopped me. I stood there seeing mentally Genevieve's patient English tan eyes following him about the room, dumbly interrogating his well-fitted back what time he was pleased to be brusque with her; answering with that loving gratitude you see in the eyes of a spaniel if he bore himself toward her with amiable complaisance; or kindling with naïve and pitiful delight — poor girl — when he was seized with the rare fancy for passing her out some such slovenly unhandsome lump of sentimental confectionery as this I had just been offered.

The big room was silent and empty. It was lunch time; all the others were out, while Mr. DeWitt had not yet gone. I turned, opened the door, and put in my head.

"Don't — don't do it," I fired at him, with tone duly lowered to miss a distant stenographer clicking away at her machine.

"Do what?" he ejaculated, looking up startled, from some proof-sheets.

"Why, this sort of thing," I explained, carefully introducing a hand and arm to gesticulate and demonstrate with. "Of course you're entirely welcome to try your wiles upon me as much as you like — I don't mind. But I am almost useless where quick artistic appreciation is required. I'm absent-minded, and never notice a thing 'until the earthquake hath passed by;' and then you are mad."

"Oh, no!" he exclaimed, "you do yourself rank

injustice. I never met a more dexterous flirt. Think of the exquisite coquetry of your rejoinder a moment ago. I've —"

Mr. DeWitt was funny. I always liked him when he was funny; but I was not to be diverted. With my eye fixed seriously upon him, I continued as though he had not spoken.

"And as for anything — er — anybody else — it is — well, it is too easy, don't you think? It is not worthy of your — talents?"

"You flatter me," he began, in what tried to be a sarcastic voice, though his eye, honester than his intention, fell before mine, and the red rose in his face; "you suggest an altogether too high estimate of my fascinations."

"I tell you," I declared, growing in assurance, "you are animated by exactly the same lofty spirit which fires the bad, mean little boy who steals apples he doesn't want, for the mere purpose of 'showing off.'"

"Hold there, my fiery young Western Advocate. You are just like a woman —"

Mr. DeWitt had made this observation (in a modified form and where I could not well resent it) many times before. Now, the instant he said it, I came inside and slammed the door behind me.

"You say I am just like a woman, Mr. DeWitt!" I exclaimed, bearing down upon him so rapidly that he looked a trifle wild. "That's a strange accusation for you to bring against me. It seems to me that if a man, even the average man — a creature of very ordinary brains and comprehension compared with you — would sit down, put his head in his hands, and try with all his might to think, he might make

a shift to realise the — the foolishness of such a charge.”

“The deuce he might!” echoed Mr. DeWitt with some warmth.

“Yes, I think he might. Just like a woman! What would he expect a woman to be just like, should you say? What do you suppose he would wish to have her like? What should you, yourself, for instance, choose to have a woman like? A camel? A weasel? An ostrich? Or, worse yet, a man?”

Mr. DeWitt, whose fine temper never stays riled long, murmured something which sounded like “dove,” but it regarded me not.

“When I do my unhoused free condition put into circumspection,” I said, “and take a husband” (“Poor soul! my heart bleeds for him!” ejaculated Mr. DeWitt parenthetically), “he will undoubtedly have some faults and failings — possibly very bad ones.”

“Heaven send he may,” said Mr. DeWitt, cordially, “for you need ’em — him, and the faults.”

“Being a man,” I continued, “he may — nay, he will — forget to mail my letters. He is like to swear more than reason —”

“Being your husband,” interjected Mr. DeWitt, “he may have provocation.”

“He may even, on rare occasions (not loudly nor vulgarly, but in a quiet, gentlemanly way), get drunk and beat me —”

“Sure!” cried Mr. DeWitt, heartily, “sure — what’s he there for?”

“Well,” I said, “I admit these things as possible to befall, and for sufficient compensating advantages,



to be borne; but he must never, never go so far as to accuse me of being just like a woman. For whatever betide, I shall never remind him that he is like a man. I shall want him to be like one. Indeed, unless he is so like that you would take him to be one, I shall not want him at all."

"And don't take him, anyhow," counselled my editor.

"However, all this is beside the question — " I began, but he jumped up suddenly.

"I'll be hanged if I put up with it!" he exclaimed. "Say another word about — about your nonsense, and I'll fire you, miss — and without a char-ack-ter, too!"

As I backed warily outside, made ready to withdraw my head and shut the door, he said something about a Woman's Rights club, and giving my talents a show, and then laughed genially.

But I observed that it was somehow impossible to him thereafter — at least when I was about — to put Genevieve through her paces in quite so wanton a manner as had been his custom. It was true, she looked always depressed. Her mutely questioning eyes, raised from articles on "Plaid Silk Hose," or "Taffeta for Hats," dumbly interrogated Mr. DeWitt's uniformly polite and unresponsive profile. But I would rather see her thus, than walking about in a fool's paradise, smiling fatuously because his "yes" or "no" or "good morning" had been said to her in a "tone of voice," or accompanied by a "look." And though it did pain me — the utter uselessness of it all, or what in mere mortal eyes seemed useless and uncalled for — I said to myself grimly, "I have demonstrated in my

own proper person that heartache is not fatal. Genevieve has a good, stout constitution. Let her take her medicine. It will not kill her; and since she seems to be a simple fool, why, she needs must have it, and the sooner the better."

Always and always in those weary days, I was fighting the desire to go back to the little studio — and what I told myself was happy bondage. I had not met Frank once at the office, and realised now that our frequent encounters in the past had not been altogether the result of chance.

The little key in my pocket tempted me, and laughed at my barren strength of denial. "Go to," whispered the bit of metal to my finger ends, "am I not the talisman to unlock the door to your treasure room, where is held waiting for you all the wealth of all the Universe?"

To go meant, of course, surrender. To remain away, never even to get my manuscript, would be held, I knew, all unkindness, all forsaking.

Finally, choosing the hour when Frank, under any circumstances, would surely be at his lunch, I put the key in my pocket and went.

There was nobody about, but the door was unlocked. I surmised that Lemuel was within, cleaning.

But no, the room was empty. I looked about it, and my eyes filled with tears. The dear, dear little room! scene of so much bliss, and so much misery. No other four walls could ever shut in a space which would be to me the same.

Then there was a long impatient sigh, and Frank rose up from the easel which had concealed him, and

came toward me. Such a strange, worn, sorrowful Frank — such a radiant Frank!

“O dearest!” he cried. “You did come back. You couldn’t hold out against love and me!” And straightway his arms were about me, and I was at peace.

“You don’t know how I have missed you,” he went on, when after a time we sat together, talking things over. “Maybe you think I’ve been able to do one stroke of work since my wayward sweetheart deserted me. Maybe you think I’ve been a pleasant person to have about. Maybe you think I didn’t come down to this old shack forty times a day and ask Lemuel if there’d been any angels in since my last call.”

He came over and knelt beside me. “Yes, it’s Cara,” he whispered. “Those are her very same eyes. Those are her hands — you’d never come back and leave any of the sweetness — any bit of the heart of my girl — in Boston.”

I admitted, in suitable language, that not Carrington West, an individual, but Francis Randolph’s sweetheart, a thing, had returned, complete, to him who desired and owned her.

“Bless your flashing sunny soul! Maybe it isn’t good to have you back — maybe I won’t keep you, now I’ve got you!” he murmured.

Alas, for the doctor’s excellent theories! Alas, for my more than excellent resolution to profit by what I knew to be the truth!

“O Frank,” I hurried on, “I am so glad you can care to have me back again, and that you aren’t going to scold me or find fault with me.”

“Fault!” echoed Frank, in open horror. “Why,



where do you suppose your faults are? I have never found any in you yet."

"Oh, I've got them all right," I answered; and of course should have added, "So have you. We are two very faulty people who could be much to each other if we would but recognise this and be reasonable."

"You have faults, have you?" inquired Frank. "Well, when do you suppose they are going to put in an appearance? According to theory, you would be tame without them, but it is a mistaken theory after all. Your good points are so fascinating, so irresistible, so interesting, that you don't need any defects to set them off. What is the good of a defect anyway? I've half a mind to get rid of some of mine."

Do you believe, with so sweet a bid as that for the things an overfond heart is always too ready to say, that I let him go on supposing I could see any defect in him? Not I! For what was I given a gift of eloquence if not for this sole use—that I should burn more beautiful incense than another woman could at the shrine of Frank?

It was a halcyon time. I knew, and perhaps Frank did as well, that there was no foundation, no stability to our peace; yet I closed my eyes to doubts and questionings and enjoyed the blissful present.

"What happy days we shall have working together," murmured Frank, finally.

"The dear, blessed work!" I echoed. "I shall do better than I have ever done. I feel that I shall be able to please you, because it is for you. Nothing but the best is good enough for it."

"Don't think, dear," said Frank, "that I do not



consider all of your work superb, if I say that I believe you will indeed do better. Why, look at it! Such affection as ours is a fire of inspiration. It is not devastating. It burns on the altar of peace. It warms and enlightens. How can you help doing finer things than you have ever done!"

I was beginning to feel unhappy. Indeed, Nemesis had me, her scrawny arm locked tight about my aching throat. I clearly recognised in myself that pitiful being who goes to the dentist to have out a bad tooth—a notoriously bad tooth, and one roundly and publicly devoted to the forceps; whose poor heart fails him at sight of the cold steel, his faltering tongue inquires the time of day, or asks if Mr. Smith be in, and his craven feet creep thence with him.

From this unwelcome picture of my spiritual self, I turned feverishly to discussion of the big book. "Show me your drawings," I urged, "all that you did while I was gone. I have an idea that I want to write out and submit to you. It will need special pictures."

"Didn't I tell you I did no good while you were gone?" Frank asked. "That was because we parted in anger. Oh, you are a power, little girl. You can make and unmake me as you choose. I never take up my pencil now without thinking of yours. It is so sweet to think of their going into battle together. We'll put up a great fight, won't we, dearest?"

I was a power because I could make or unmake him!

Even in the midst of my blindness, I had sense to

know and remember that I should be a power only as I made or unmade my own soul.

"Frank," I announced presently, "I consulted an oracle while I was in Boston, and she told me just why you love me. You don't know the real reason."

"Ah, but I do," he answered fondly. "I love your fine soul, your big brain, your tender heart, — mother-like as well as lover-like, — your priceless humour and unsmotherable wit, your delightful presence, your lovely, graceful body, your unalterable honesty, and incapacity for any kind of hypocrisy — oh, and qualities one cannot set down in the most affectionate catalogue. But I love you not because I can explain you. There is only one eternal, unanswerable explanation and justification for love — we love *because*. And yet, you know dear, if I wanted to, I could give more reasons for loving you than would justify half a community for loving the other half."

It appeared to me time for the book to receive some attention. There were occasions upon which I was even grateful to the book. We planned and worked long and earnestly, but Frank was in a rarely tender mood this day. As we sat, he at his drawing-board, I at the table, he called suddenly but guardedly across the room to me,

"Carita!"

"What, Frank?" I answered, startled.

"Nothing," he told me softly, "only I wanted to remind you that I'm still loving you — you might forget, you little wild thing."

We did excellent work. Lemuel was with us a goodly portion of the time, and a young artist from

one of the studios beyond came in to show us a poster design.

Frank had an engagement, and left before I was ready to go, Lemuel departing with him. They had been gone but a moment when I heard a quick light step upon the stair. The door flung open and Frank hurried in.

"Forget something?" I inquired, my fond glance running to welcome and caress and delight in the loved face and form.

"No, I came back to tell you that I love you," he replied laughing. He stood beside my table and dropped an arm lightly about my shoulders as I sat. "I believe I have mentioned it before — and in almost those very words," he whispered.

"I think I remember your alluding to something of the sort," I whispered back, looking up into his face with utter content.

"Well, it is a good idea of mine," he maintained. "It will bear repeating."

But, despite the light speech, he looked down upon me with eyes of passionate tenderness.

As my eyes met the gaze, love swelled in my heart like pain. Still looking in each other's eyes, he drew my hands from their work. "Frank, O Frank!" I said, almost with a sob, "you are all of love to me — you have my whole heart."

And as he took me gently into his arms, my face on his breast, his cheek pressed to mine, his deep voice murmured in my ear, "Little sweetheart — my little darling — my lamb — and so have you all mine, and all of me. And we will be so tender of each other's love, and heart, and life. We will shut out all pain and unlove. Mine — mine — mine," he



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whispered again and again, in love's own accents of breaking tenderness and music. And then the sweetest lips that ever said "I love" came seeking mine.

And in my heart I cried, "Oh, if I could go now! If I could close my eyes, here on his breast, his lips upon mine, his arms around me, his heart beating in harmony with mine — only love and peace between and about us!"

## CHAPTER XVII.

### “For A Hawk — A Horse — or A Husband”

“Come, wilt thou see me ride?  
And when I am o’ horseback, I will swear  
I love thee infinitely.”

It had been a late season, but spring was upon the land at last. And my uneasy, presaging heart stirred with spring longings for the old, free, wholesome life of my Texas plains.

I had found something touching in that earlier and abrupt bursting forth of all New York into light fresh garments. It seemed the city dweller’s devoir to the jocund season, his method of indicating that he, too, as well as his country brother, knows that spring is come.

Before the eye of memory — between me and the copy I toiled upon — was persistently spread that wonder of gracious loveliness, a Texas prairie in spring flower. Along the irrigating ditches and in every bit of shadow, here and there, they clustered and crowded, blossoms of pale pink, deep rose, purple, violet, and pure white. My introverted sight beheld the broad gaze of the sun to fall upon whole slopes of vivid scarlet and acres of daffodil yellow, burning gold, the very concentration and radiance of

the living sunshine itself. There were the *mesquite* trees, just in leaf, looking like tender green willows; the cacti unfolding their splendours of orange, blood red, and rosy pink; sufficient of themselves, in their blooming time, to glorify a whole region.

Now was the season of round-ups, and sheep dip-pings and shearings. Continually, above the city's brazen roar, I heard a trampling of many hoofs, a tossing and clashing of myriad horns, a multifold lowing and bleating, the voices of the herder, the dipper, the rustler, the brander, the hot iron, and the bellowing, protesting Texas calf.

I could not choose but know how, out there, the streams were up, the *arroyos* running full; the whole face of earth laughing back to the laughing skies; the air wooing, seductive, intoxicating. The beeves would begin to be sleek and fat, and your saddle-pony, that was turned into the pasture a month ago to rest up, as broncho as a wild mustang of the plains.

And whether I would or no, I must think of Nipper and Glass-Eye and Little Bronc, galloping loose over the stretches of the Ojo Bravo pastures, my saddle hanging in the ranch-house storeroom. And a kind of sickness would blow across me.

I know that I chanted this sort of thing continually, at the house, at the office, and to Jim Baxter, who had come over from Washington, and at once captivated all the hearts at both places.

Seven times a day did I praise my native pastures, celebrating the perennial charm of their vernal renewing, and the delights of their spring drama, until what time my editor heard the sound of the cornet, flute, harp, sackbut, psaltery, dulcimer, and all kinds

of instruments tuning up for the accustomed overture, he called a halt in pretty clear, round terms; and Genevieve, and even Mr. Corcoran sustained him.

"Hold hard there, my prairie blossom," Mr. DeWitt interrupted me one day. "If you keep up that stroke much longer, you'll convince us it was a mistake to transplant you."

Genevieve gave me a significant look out of her solemn eyes, as one child says to another who is under discipline, "I told you you'd be whipped if you kept on."

And Mr. Corcoran came in gravely, "Yes, he is right, Young Lochinvar. You have about filled up the measure of our instruction on the plains, the cattle business and broncho riding. We're not capable of much more. As I see it, we've got to get this thing checked in you, or you'll have to turn loose your job here, go back to West Texas, and attend to the neglected matter of breaking your neck."

The president was passing us at the moment, going toward his private room, and stopped to listen to the discussion, giving me, unobserved, a tender glance and a fleeting hand pressure. To the amazement and mystification of the others, he warmly seconded the suggestion that I go home to Texas, urging that I needed a vacation.

No one knew but Miss Salem, who ever kept her own counsel, how the Middle West was being written, and none guessed, save probably Bushrod Floyd, that there was more than the usual business and literary interest between Frank and me.

Now, when the president had left us, Mr. DeWitt suggested,

"Try a substitute. Go up to the region of the riding academies, and sample some of them; see some real riding. You might undertake a round or two yourself — if you have the nerve — we'll foot the bill, if you make some good copy out of it. What do you say?"

The thought that I was due at the studio to work on *That Book*, which had just come to a portentously stupid portion — like a heavy, dull, sodden pudding bestuck with bitter, dark plums of statistics — that I was to go and write, I pray you recollect, while Frank would not be there — was even then eating into my heart. And —

"You may come with me," supplemented Genevieve, "I am going up there this afternoon. I can give you some points."

"On —?" I said.

"On riding," she retorted, with unexpected spirit, "though I am going to get a number of personal items. I have ridden — since I was six years old — until I came to America."

As I hesitated, eyeing her, I heard Mr. Corcoran chuckle; and Mr. DeWitt muttered to him, "Sick 'em! It'll be interesting. Texas plains against English 'cross country. I'll bet on the Texas girl."

"Well, I think I'll back Albion," debated the shameless Mr. Corcoran. "She doesn't make so much noise, but she's a stayer, Miss Bucks is."

"I shall be very glad to go, Miss Bucks," I said, cordially, "are you quite ready? Then, if you like, let's go right along." And I followed her out, turning back at the door to include the two men in one glance of comprehensive scorn.

Outside we met Jim Baxter coming in, he an-



nounced, to loaf with us a little while, if he should be allowed. Jim — because, I suppose, he is so big and simple, so whole and harmonious a creature — is at once understood, liked, and desired by the most widely different people.

I have never seen Frank more sweetly and pleasingly himself than he always was with Jim. Bushrod openly loved the tall Texan; Mr. DeWitt showed him a half-humourous affection; while the whole Corcoran household and the orthodox, conventional, rigidly-limited Miss Bucks all delighted in him.

So now Genevieve and I gladly annexed Jim, and the three of us went up to one of the big fashionable riding academies near the park.

We beheld horsemanship as she is taught, Genevieve with looks of respectful approval, we Texans with alien, derisive, prejudiced eyes, of course.

"Isn't it funny?" I demanded of Jim.

"It is the best of exercise," interfered Miss Bucks, jealously.

"Oh, yes," I assented (as Jim remained silent), "plodding around this ring is no doubt good exercise. It costs a young fortune, and ought to be good for something. But if you've learned to ride as you did to talk or walk, if you've loped across the plains, with neither hill, hollow, nor your pony's humour to interfere with your galloping from dawn to dark, where the sky was the only boundary the eye could reach, as it closed over your vast brown-green floor like an inverted bowl — why, this seems pretty tame."

"But do you not see," protested Miss Bucks, "that these people are doing, and doing well, some-

thing much more difficult than that common cantering 'cross country, of which you are talking?"

"Yes, I see it," I answered. "I am perfectly aware that I could not, on a little flat saddle and with short stirrups, ride a spirited horse at a rough trot, without labour and practice. But I cannot imagine why anybody should wish to do it."

"For the exercise — it exercises every muscle in the human body," pronounced Miss Bucks solemnly — almost religiously.

"Oh, that!" I cried in disgust. "If that is all, I'd rather buy one of these household whing-whangs with weights and handles, and pull and haul it by a diagram, till I had got the 'exercise' needed. Then I suppose I might be permitted to get on a smooth-gaited horse, and ride him as I pleased, simply for fun."

"Fun," echoed Miss Bucks, with a strange falling inflection.

"Oh, Jim!" I cried, "do you know what vision that smug riding-master, with his English whiskers and his English top-boots, brings up to me?"

"Well, no," hesitated Jim, eyeing the man. "He don't remind me of anything I ever saw before."

"Why, he brings up to my mind your Baldy," I exclaimed.

Baldy was a glass-eyed, dish-faced *pinto*, inveterately broncho, for whom the Devil River region was ever too small when he got on a rampage, and whose digestion troubled him if he did not rampage at least once a week.

"This chap and Baldy would make a good pair to draw to, wouldn't they?" agreed Jim.

"Fancy," I said, "the surprise of this immaculate

and consummate individual on Baldy's back, when he should feel Baldy's spine arching like that of a high-strung cat upon the approach of a dog. Think of his well-bred horror when the saddle should suddenly shoot up some six feet, and come down on four legs as rigid as iron, with a sickening plunk! What disapprobation he would feel for Baldy's trick of standing on his hind legs and playing the 'Carnival of Venice,' with all the runs, variations, and heavy bass on an imaginary piano ten feet long, with his fore feet; or his ballet-girl accomplishment of hopping clear off the ground, reversing himself in mid-air and coming down with his head where his tail had been, and vice versa."

"Yes," assented Jim, mildly, "Baldy's a mean horse. Jake Shorter's riding him this year, an' him an' Baldy'd been having it up and down the last time I saw 'em together. Yes — up and down it was. But Jake didn't make any complaint. He just remarked, 'I've seed buckin' ponies, and as a broncho buster I've rode buckin' ponies; but that there glass-eyed, pole-necked, spotted-skinned hyener's got more kinds of buck'n a greaser's got kinds o' lies!'"

"Well," I said, laughing, "when this sawdust knight is inducted into the approved method of riding a bucking broncho, may I be there to see!"

"Why, yes," spoke up Genevieve, with some heat, "and I, too. I dare say you would find it excellent sport; for I don't doubt he can do it perfectly!"

I laughed again, incredulously and unpleasantly, and the red flamed up under Genevieve's transparent skin.

Jim's voice fell upon the rising storm, and quenched it.

" Oh, yes," he agreed, heartily, with his large, placid toleration; " I expect he could do it all right. We don't admire this sort of thing, Miss Carry," indicating the mass of riders with a wave of his hand, " but it isn't safe to suppose that a fellow who rides that way can't do anything else."

Miss Bucks gave him a grateful glance, and leaving them to harmonise, I turned to look at the riding, when coming toward me from the entrance door I saw the face and form that were never far from my thoughts. Where was there ever any one like him? so masterful, so compelling, so irresistibly lovable, my heart's tormentor and darling, its grief and delight.

He had come hoping to catch us, he said; he wanted some rough sketches of horses and riders. Miss Bucks and I both went to the dressing-rooms and put on habits, and Frank made several rapid sketches, vigorous, masterly things, of us and Jim mounted and variously grouped. His work was admirable. I looked at it and was filled with satisfaction. I could indeed feel proud of him as an artist; and as he talked to the others, and I observed the distinctive charm of the man, as he helped me on and off my horse, his eyes dwelling tenderly upon me, his touch caressing me, his whispered word of admiration and approval in my ear, I told myself that he was the flower of gentlemen as well, and the prince of lovers.

## CHAPTER XVIII.

### The Highest Places

"Wisdom crieth upon the highest places of the city."

"BUT, Mr. DeWitt," I demurred, "do you think it will make a story at all? It seems to me there's very little in it."

"Very little in what? In the Island matter, or in that skull of yours?"

"Oh, if you mean that —" I began. "And then I can't always be —"

Mr. DeWitt looked at his watch, and announced, "My dear Wild West, I think I have twenty minutes till those proofs come in — which may be profitably devoted to your education."

Here, I know, he detected some restless motion on my part, and a threatening light in my free-born Texas eye, for he exclaimed, somewhat hastily, "Hold there! I'll give it to you easy, in the form of a story. Come now, I'm not often purely benevolent; but this is intended wholly for your good. You want to be educated out of a sort of wooden-headed literalness to which you are so wedded — of which you are so respectful. You simply must get rid of that idea that a story will come to you whole. You'll find your very best ones are one-third outside stuff and two-thirds from yourself."

“ Well, go on with your instructive talk,” I said, sullenly. “ Does it begin ‘ Once upon a time,’ or ‘ A was a — ? ’ ”

Mr. DeWitt honoured this speech as it deserved, and proceeded. The story he told me was that of a lank and somewhat seedy provincial contributor who came to New York, and, being curtly advised by a savage, overworked editor to go to the top of old Trinity and write an article about what he saw, accepted the satiric suggestion literally, went, looked, was inspired, and wrote an article which “ took the town.”

My editor wound up impressively, “ So this is what happened to the man who not only could make his story out of himself, but who knew it. I now dismiss you, with my blessing, to New York in general, and yourself generally, particularly, and all the time. Go forth — *into yourself* — my dear young literary and journalistic postulant, and return bringing in your sheaves.”

Words failed my sulky resentment. “ Huh ! ” I announced, and walked slowly and truculently out, Mr. DeWitt’s glinting eye fixed steadily on me to the last, so that on my way to the door, I only dared push distressfully against his overcoat which lay across a desk, upset a photograph as I swept up my belongings, and step gingerly on Texas, whose yelps, along with Mr. DeWitt’s steely glance, pursued me all the way down the eleven stories and out onto the street.

Frank went down in the elevator with me. “ I heard DeWitt administering that old story of his about the Trinity steeple fellow, Cara. Surely you wouldn’t call that stuff advice, or attempt to take

it literally. Can you come on up to the studio? I have a plan at last for that tenth chapter."

"I'm sorry, Frank," I answered, untruthfully, "but I must get up my week's story." And he left me at the corner, evidently offended.

When he was gone, the effect of Mr. DeWitt's recital returned upon me. My anger evaporated as my enthusiasm rose. I said to myself, "Beshrew me, but I also will climb up on a high place and look down." (Alas! the wooden-headed literalness so perceivably touched upon by Mr. DeWitt was already displaying itself.) "I will be struck with the vastness of the human swarm beneath me, saddened by the contemplation of its mournful destiny, amused at its vapid follies and mole-like blindness. I will be uplifted, pitying, pathetic, cynical, humorous. I will ponder, philosophise, scintillate. And I, even I, will also take the town!"

Having settled that it was a deed to be done, and there being, with me, only one suitable time to do any approved thing, — the present instant, — I selected as my point of operations a sky-scraper far above the tip of Trinity's spire, and started out from the house after lunch blithe and hopeful, armed with a large red note-book, a freshly sharpened pencil, a batch of poetical quotations which I knew should occur to me at certain points in my observations, and an unshaken confidence in my ability to feel as many different ways in a given time as anybody.

I journeyed with common people up to the seventeenth floor, in an elevator that went so fast it swept out of me before we reached the tenth story every sensation but a big, pale gray astonishment, leaving my mind in a charmingly blank condition to receive



any impressions which I felt the view ought to make upon me. From the seventeenth floor, where the elevator abandoned me, I climbed up and up on foot, till I began to fear that some thoughtless person had, in cruel jest, purposely removed and secreted the end of the stairway.

These fears were unfounded, for I presently crawled up the last little ladderway, through a large rat-hole, and out into the air. I stepped up on to the narrow circular platform, and, poking my nose incautiously over the stone coping, looked directly down. Then I shut my eyes and jerked my head back exactly in the manner of a turtle. The dome rocked to its foundation. A vague rushing filled my ears, and inward trembling possessed me. I wondered if anybody of just my weight had ever been up there before, and hastily laid down my notebook by way of throwing out ballast.

This was not a promising start, but I gathered myself together and cautiously tried again. I avoided looking directly down, and confined my attention to the more remote streets, where the tiny horse and elevated cars moved along like minute and ingenious mechanical toys; where the continual streams of people, meeting, passing, hurrying to and fro, made no impression of individualities upon the mind. I was about to be struck with the multitudinous human life of the great city, and the first quotation was just going to occur to me, when my meditations were interrupted by a deep educational voice behind me, issuing a mandate to some one below deck.

I glanced hastily around and saw, ascending through the rat-hole, a long drab visage surmounted



by a forbidding black bonnet. I guessed but too truly, from the sounds that now came up the flume, that she was a preceptress from some outlying seminary, convoying a class of girls on a sightseeing tour, and bent on dosing them with ingeniously incorrect information.

Now, could anything worse have befallen!

They were as lively as so many young crows; and as the preceptress lectured upon the surrounding objects they soon exhausted their little stock of adjectives.

The Brooklyn Bridge, I learned, was "sweet," the various tall buildings around "awfully nice," the shipping, the engirdling arms of the North and East Rivers, "too cunning for anything;" and the way Madame explained everything was "just grand." They scuffled so recklessly that my heart was kept in my mouth. By the time they went down, all my thoughts on "No. 1 — uplifted" were in a state of chaos. I collected my faculties with an effort, and went determinedly on to the second stage, the sad, reflective, philosophical one, the quotation for which was,

"We scheme and plan, the cry for love  
Mounts upward from the seething city."

The very thought of "the moonlit mount, where silence sits to listen to the stars," which I had ignorantly hoped to work in somewhere, made me weary.

I had no more than got to the "seething city," and into a dusky, remote, pensive frame of mind, when with a volley of little soft exclamations, and much helping of Mamie and Lula and Maudie, by George

and Charlie and Arthur, not one pair, but a whole platoon of honeymooners invaded me. Of all the honeymooners I ever saw, these were the most virulent and confluent, the most flagrant and abandoned. So far from trying to conceal their besotted condition, they only feared lest one might fail to observe it, and put themselves to continual trouble to make it plain to one. George held Mamie, who was too venturesome; and Lula clasped Charlie, who was wildly reckless. They all chewed gum with an ardour and devotion I have never seen equalled.

But I would fain draw the veil of silence over the sufferings they inflicted upon me, and only say that they finally left me; they took their beaks from out my heart, and took their forms from off my door.

I had not come to New York to succeed in journalism only to be balked by an even half-dozen of honeymooners — not I. So I thrust far from me the very remembrance of them, and schemed out what it seemed to me ought to make a pretty fair article of a bitter, pessimistic sort, if not the dazzling prose poem I had expected to write. I had opened my note-book upon the stone coping, when a voice behind me, the sweetest voice in all the world, but wholly unwelcome there and then, said, softly, "Carita."

I turned to find Frank looking quite as fond as any of those bridegrooms. I was enraged. I was reduced to the last drop of patience. It was plain he thought a bit of sentiment some hundreds of feet above the rest of the world would be rather nice. Of course he did, and I remembered with inward quailing the grins of those young Benedicts just departed.

I rose abruptly. "I'm just going down, Frank,"

I said. And my note-book must have taken the hint, for it flopped off the edge of the coping like a big awkward bird, and went flapping down to the street.

"Don't hurry away," Frank urged. "I never have a moment alone with you that isn't spoiled by work. Let us sit and talk a little while."

The work at the studio was work, you see. This matter, which was only a commission from Mr. De-Witt, and concerned my weekly column whereby I earned my bread, was plainly regarded as a bit of child's play, to be pushed aside disrespectfully. It was not a propitious beginning.

"Cara," Frank went on, as we sat on the big ledge and looked down at the city, "I want you to let me announce our engagement — privately — to a few friends only," as he saw instant protest in my face.

"Wait a little. It — it's all so new now. We scarcely know yet — oh, let's wait awhile," I pleaded, incoherently.

"I want the privilege of calling upon you often, dear. We want to go out together, to begin to belong to each other. I should like to tell Mrs. Corcoran," urged Frank, wistfully.

At first, the prospect of frequent calls from Frank, the association of our leisure, was alluring. Then I thought of our young lovers, and the vision which came before me of them upon one side of the tiny parlour, hanging over their lexicons and exchanging glances which were in themselves dictionaries of love; with Frank and myself upon the other side, oblivious of them, and gazing in each other's eyes, was so absurd that I laughed out.

This sounded unkind, and I was obliged to ex-

plain the cause of my mirth. I went on from Corydon and Phyllis to speak of the sending of blissful lovers which had so harassed me a month before, and concluded by telling him of my recent honeymooners.

"There comes a pair of them now!" I exclaimed, as a blonde head appeared in the stair opening. "I can always tell them by the way they brush their hair."

The man in the stairway came swiftly up the last steps. He had the quick, light foot characteristic of some heavy people. His hat was in his hand, and the fair curls were held in damp rings upon his forehead by perspiration. He emerged, breathing a little quick and smiling. It was Bushrod Floyd. "I was down-stairs seeing about some cuts, and the elevator man told me you were up here, so I came —"

He caught sight of Frank behind me, paused, those quick-expanding pupils made his blue eyes suddenly black, and the three of us, perhaps the most uncomfortable trio at that altitude in New York, stared at each other for one miserable moment.

Then I found voice to say, "I was just going down when you came."

"Miss West complains of interruptions," began Frank, in a kindly, natural tone. "She says that all the world is in a conspiracy against this one article she is trying to write. Suppose we go down, Bush, and leave her to such solitude as she can find."

But I protested, and the three of us went down together, recovered my note-book, and separated at the step of my car.

It was an overwhelming desire for an appreciative

audience, and the fact that I shrank from mentioning the occurrence again to Bushrod Floyd, and was thus denied his sympathy — the only available — which blinded my eagle intellect, led captive my fine judgment, and betrayed me into the idiot weakness of telling this thing (with some reasonable reservations) at the office — yes, to Mr. DeWitt, the light scoffer, himself.

He received my tragic recital so quietly, and with such unusual absence of wounding comment and humorous interpolation, that I fatuously deemed him touched for once. When I had gotten so far, and paused, he said :

“ Proceed. I perish to know what you did when these predatory honeymooners left.”

“ Well,” I returned, “ you know yourself that if there is any redeeming feature in a calamity it is my cheerful way to find it out; so, as the last snigger died away down the rat-hole, and I was alone again, I said to myself, ‘ Number one and Number two are lost. There is not a dust of benevolence left in me; my natural milk of human kindness is turned to Dutch cheese. If all those people I see running around down there have no more sense than these samples they pass up to me through the flume, I *want* them to have corns and be disappointed in love. They deserve it. It will be salutary for them. And if they are not sad or in pain, they will be able to devote all their time and energies to the making of others so.’ ”

Mr. DeWitt gave me a sort of reluctantly approving grin. “ You are brilliantly right,” he remarked. “ You seem to be distinctly coming out.”

I continued, encouraged: “ I could not, to save

my life, be pathetic over the misfortunes of a lot of creatures who have nothing better to do than to chase a person around, interrupt him in the pursuit of his legitimate avocation, and refuse him a moment to reflect or emote properly. I said to myself that all was not lost, however. Number one and Number two were impossible, but there was yet Number three. And what a frame of mind I was in to be cynical! I embraced the idea of being brilliant, scornful, withering! I decided to set going the ever-ready, cruel laughter of the world, which never sees — the great ostrich — that it is laughing at itself."

"Yes, quite so — ought to be good stuff — why are you so gloomy and savage about it? Let's see it," said Mr. DeWitt.

"See it? There isn't any," I responded, miserably. "I stretched out my hand for my note-book, which had been kicked by the foot of the last descending bride onto the giddy edge of the coping. It slid coquettishly away from me. I clutched for it. It spread its red wings abroad, fluttered its white leaves, and sailed down toward the pavement below, carrying its disgracefully innocent contents."

"'Disgracefully innocent,' is an ill phrase," interrupted Mr. DeWitt, "a vile phrase."

"It may be so," I returned, doggedly, "but it fits the case. There were no 'Descriptive bits;' there wasn't any 'Eloquence,' any 'Pathos,' any 'Mellow Humour' or 'Sparkling Wit,' — only a handful of blank leaves where these all should have been! This was negatively bad; but in the back of the book was the disgraceful innocence — a few recipes for freckle lotions, bandoline, tea biscuits —"

Mr. DeWitt roared joyously and unaffectedly.

"Oh, laugh by all means," I almost sobbed; "it's so healthful, you know."

Mr. DeWitt compassionately straightened out his face.

"I recovered it afterward," I went on. "That building is a miserable failure, because the observatory — above the tip-top point of old Trinity spire — hasn't got any really good place to have emotions in; no place where you can be sure that the feelings you know you ought to have will not get all mixed up and confused with those feelings thrust upon you by trivial and irritating interruptions."

Mr. DeWitt roared again, enjoyingly, but plainly more at his own thought than at anything I was saying.

"Talk about 'wooden-headed literalness'!" he cried, "but my dear Lochinvar, this breaks even your record. Where on earth was your individuality? your originality? To go up on a high place! You might at least have gone and fallen down a deep place — or — or —"

"Mr. DeWitt," I interrupted, with bitterness, "writing things is evidently not my vocation; you were right beyond all doubt as to the folly of transplanting little local fledgling celebrities, and Mr. Randolph was all wrong. Here is Thursday's copy. I shall not take the town with this story, but when I consider the sort of people it seemed to be filled with, I no longer think I want it."

And I went out, resolutely gloomy and depressed, followed by Mr. DeWitt's good-humoured rallyings and laughter.

## CHAPTER XIX.

### “Underneath the Bough”

“Wherefore within the city fire illumined  
Are not these punished, if God’s wrath be on them;  
And if it be not, wherefore in such guise  
Are they condemned?”

THE first ardour of summer had dropped upon us like a steaming blanket.

It was suddenly burning hot one morning. At lunch time came a grand old, insolent, bellowing storm, blew the dust rudely, brutally; thundered, pelted the just and the unjust with big, hard, low-bred rain, and then for a time it was cool, and life (which many people had been seriously debating abandoning) again became feasible. But just as I was beginning to lift my drooping head a bit, it returned upon us hotter than before, and grinning broadly as though it said, “Hah! fooled you that time!”

Hot weather is a great developer of character. When the boiling heats come on, things in various persons’ dispositions transpire, to your great surprise and edification — and theirs.

I drooped into the office that glowing afternoon, laid a moist wad of copy on Mr. DeWitt’s desk, and perspired some such reflection as the above.



My editor, crisp and fresh as usual, looked up, with his little tolerant smile.

"Yes, that seems to be true, my dear Southwest," he agreed. "I myself have observed that when the mercury begins to go up and up, and your spirits, your collar and your energy down and down, when the zest of life evaporates, when the heat palpitates off buildings and sidewalks, when the day is a sore burden, and night a weariness void of repose, then the 'savageness in unreclaimed blood' breaks out," and he smiled again, and looked a little cooler.

It was so evident that he did not include himself in these observations, that I interjected,

"—If anybody had any savageness—or any blood, even! But you—"

"Among the tenements on the East Side," pursued Mr. DeWitt, smoothly, "this turbulence manifests itself in street brawls, free fights, and connubial lammings. Among gentler and more enlightened people, like ourselves, it is quite commonly expressed in the scarcely less baleful picnic."

"Picnic!" I echoed. "Why do you mention a picnic?"

"I will (if permitted) tell you presently, my dear Wild West," returned he. "As I was observing, we suffer, we perspire, we become exasperated and irritable beyond measure; we are really homicidal; we long to massacre and destroy. But as all the traditions of our class are against the gratification of such impulses, as our training and habits debar us from the more generous and direct relief of cutting throats and breaking heads, we simply explode into a picnic. The picnic virus is now seething in

Mr. Baxter's veins. He was in here nearly an hour, endeavouring to infect me."

"Poor Jim!" said I. "Out on his ranch, the winds sweep up from the gulf, over miles and miles of open prairie. His front yard would make a New York county."

"Where have I heard something like that before?" murmured Mr. DeWitt.

"Poor Jim!" I repeated (adding, mentally, "and poor me"). "Pent among brick and mortar, and cut off from all outdoor life! I've been noticing ever since spring opened that he was as nervous and restive as a mustang tied to a *mesquite* in a bare place, watching the rest of the bunch out in the high grass."

"It has appeared somewhat as you say to me," concurred Mr. DeWitt, "though I fear I should never have been able to express it so felicitously. Well, he pleaded most fondly the charms and benefits of a picnic; and as it is hot, and a Sunday picnic is a madly vulgar contrivance, and our evil star was unquestionably in the ascendant, we listened to the voice of his charming — Miss Bucks and myself — and we fell. That is, we fell in with this fell picnic scheme — Ugh! how criminally vulgar. That big Texas fellow is a hypnotist. I am convinced that he could persuade me to wheel a baby-carriage up Broadway."

Mr. Corcoran came over from his desk and imparted to me that he and Jim were to secure the means of transportation, for Jim scorned all trains, cars, boats, and other public conveyances, and said a picnic was no picnic unless you had your own rig and a team no other fellow could drive around.

Mrs. Corcoran and I were to accumulate the lunch. Miss Bucks and Mr. DeWitt were to be our guests.

The young lovers were to contribute themselves, and the spectacle of their felicity. Indeed, I do not think it ever occurred to any of us to so much as consult them. It was too well understood that they would go smiling along with us — asking no questions — for a leap into the bottomless pit, so they were but suffered to go together. Mr. DeWitt and Miss Bucks, who each boarded above Seventy-fourth Street, were to come down to our house Sunday morning, any time before ten o'clock, and the assembled picnic was to proceed from there to some point which Jim had, as he explained, "scouted out."

When I asked Bushrod Floyd how he was inclined for a day in the woods, he answered me, somewhat whimsically, "A day! A day in the woods! Why, is there any such possible subdivision of time as a day? What can anybody do with an inadequate day? No, no, I'm not complaining — You and a day! Why, I think it will answer."

And as he concluded this characteristic speech, looking up at me from his drawing-board with Bushrod's gentle, half-melancholy smile, Frank, whom I had not supposed to be in the building, stepped out of his room and came toward us, his eyes fixed upon my face.

I had made myself the subject of uproarious laughter and ridicule by announcing my intention to invite him to the picnic. They had confided to each other, in my presence, that it needed some one from the remote wilds of West Texas to come and invite the president of the Salem Publishing Com-

pany—to invite even that exclusive and unapproachable gentleman, Mr. Francis Randolph—to a Sunday picnic.

So now, unpropitious as I felt the occasion, I turned smilingly to Frank, and said: "Mr. Randolph, will you come and play with us at our picnic? We are going over into Jersey, Sunday, for a day under the skies."

And, as he came to a stop beside us, I saw that Frank's face was pale, his eyes hard. He glanced slowly from Bushrod to me, and back again, then returned, "We?—we?" and smiled coldly.

The blood rushed to my face till it blazed painfully—for all the world as if he had slapped me. Every unregenerate impulse in me sprang up with a stick in its hand. I looked at him and hated him; each beauty and grace and talent he possessed made weight upon the side of my anger, resentment, and hatred. I had asked him—because I loved him and he loved me, and I was not afraid to do so—to come and spend a day in the woods, where I should be one of the party; an invitation Bushrod had thanked me for so eagerly, and which it seemed to me my own avowed lover need not have scorned; and he had answered—and before another's eyes—with a cold sneer.

I was too deeply wounded, too confused with pain and anger to venture upon any retort. Bushrod, I felt, comprehended the scene, and would have spoken; but I never meant to do anything but stand by my guns, so I said quickly, meeting Frank's cold look with one of bitter defiance:

"Yes, we—Mr. Floyd and I—the Corcoran

household, Mr. DeWitt and Miss Bucks; and Jim Baxter, the originator of the plan."

The "Mr. Floyd and I" went home, as I had meant it should, and I saw Frank's pale face grow yet paler. But, "You could not fail of a delightful day — whether in Jersey or elsewhere — with so bright and congenial a party," he said, courteously; and added, "I only regret that I shall be out of town Saturday, and Sunday forenoon."

My eyes were fastened upon his; I would have suffered anything rather than wince or recede, and he finally replied to them, "I give you all my good wishes," and with another glance which included Bushrod and me, and a most graceful salutation, he passed out.

Poor Bushrod held his eyes down, his face all pink with distress. But I thrust the pain and anger away from me, and with a gay word or two left him, nor was I at the office again before our picnic. I was strangely able to dismiss the ugly scene from my immediate thoughts. It was as though I said to it, "Stand back, please, and wait your turn."

And through all our tumult of gay preparation and anticipation, I was singularly light-hearted and happy.

When, on Sunday morning, those men drove up with the turnout, Mrs. Corcoran and I were watching from the front window. She clutched my arm. "Look at that thing — it's a patrol-wagon!" she exclaimed.

I myself had been occupied with admiring the fine horses Jim had brought; but when I examined the vehicle in question I was obliged to admit, Polonius-wise, that it was backed very like a patrol wagon.

On the driver's seat, in front, sat Jim and Mr. Corcoran; and behind that, seats ran along the two sides of the thing. The big red wheels and the high dashboard, with its double lamps, were points of fatal similarity; the brake handle suggested the gong, and even the big handsome team and heavy harness, all glorious with knobs and rings and ornaments of brass, increased the degrading resemblance.

This was a check, and we all felt it so. The lovers, who were exchanging whispered remarks as they finished packing the last lunch-basket, came hurrying hand in hand to the window, and looked out. There was a pause in the cheery bustle of preparation.

But Miss Bucks, who had just arrived in a hat of the wash-basin variety, around which some semi-transparent stuff was skimpily festooned, a streamer of it dangling lank and weedy at the back, Miss Bucks opined that what she had passed at our door was “a very smart turnout.” And Bushrod Floyd having come down the street, big, fresh, and looking most unusually well in speckless white flannels, also laughed good-naturedly at our dismay. Moreover, when the fevered ardour of picnicking is coursing through your veins, it will take more — it will take much more — than a little matter of a distasteful conveyance to cool it. And something approaching this ardour was visible in every eye. Even Mr. DeWitt showed a hilarity which, considering his usual manner of quiet alertness, might be called little short of boisterous. So we went down and climbed into the penal chariot, and fled away toward Jersey with light hearts.

And it was a lovely spot Jim had found, a spot

astonishingly secluded, in the midst of so close a civilisation and cultivation, dim, still, withdrawn, apart, with big trees whispering sedately, a bit of water, rocks, and glimpses of sky.

Genevieve, the English girl, and lover of out-door life, was particularly happy in these surroundings. And they suited her. I thought I had never seen her so harmonious and so likable. But when I looked at all the others in turn, it seemed to me it was much the same with each. Our day, our conditions and our mood, all seemed favouring and happy.

So we settled down blissfully in a beautiful shady spot, beside a clear pool. The voice of one reading aloud, the running response of pleasant laughter, lapsed occasionally into comment or reminiscence. All was peace.

"I here take occasion to confess, in justice to our Western members," remarked Mr. DeWitt, lowering the book and looking across the undulating greenness, "that this isn't nearly so bad as I painted it." Then his clear, pleasing voice took up the narrative which so amused and interested every one of those widely varying tastes and intelligences. There showed Mr. DeWitt's clever intuition.

I had never guessed till that day of the picnic how charming a companion Bushrod Floyd could be. Big, strong, even-tempered, self-effacing, he was the ideal man for such an excursion. It was he who brought the cushions from our hated vehicle, placed them against the boles of giant trees, and made comfortable couches on which we women could lounge; going then and lying down on the grass,



UNDERNEATH THE BOUGH





his hat tipped over his eyes, and promulgating strong and varied assertions of perfect comfort.

It was he who provided the book from which Mr. DeWitt read. "I put it in as my contribution to the lunch," he explained, gravely. "People who sit about under trees on a day like this and fail to read some poetry, will go home spiritually hungry. You dropped this, Miss Cara. It was the book-marker I made when I thought you were going to read to us. I don't think it appropriate for DeWitt." And he turned with his arm under his head, and looked in dreamy content off toward the little line of sparkling water, where a tiny river ran between the trees. I took my souvenir and read:

"A book of verses underneath the bough,  
A jug of wine, a loaf of bread and thou  
Beside me singing in the wilderness —  
Ah, Wilderness were Paradise enow."

The lines were framed with one of his inimitable decorative borders. A half-seen figure, hidden behind the tree trunk, the bended arm and slender hand reaching down to clasp jug and loaf, the book laid open, and the suggested beauty of dappled sunshine and shadow in its handling.

I, alone, of course, noted the curved little finger on that hand, and smiled. When the dainty thing in going the rounds reached Jim, he howled melodiously. He had had the arrangements too much on his mind to eat any breakfast, and the sight of that frugal meal which Omar sang was too much for him. He declared noisily that he was dying of hunger, that no coyote was ever torn by the pangs of famine as was he at that moment.

"Oh, say! Let's have dinner," he pleaded. "Don't you know that's what a picnic is? It's dinner — away off out-of-doors somewhere; but it's *dinner*, you know. Great Scott! I'm starving. I could eat a —"

"There, there," interrupted Mrs. Corcoran, laughing, "you shall have dinner." And so the lunch was got out before anybody but Jim was ready for it. The rest of us nibbled a little, then agreed to put the lunch away and go about on an exploring tour for exercise and appetite.

Jim naturally did not feel so restlessly inclined, so he lay down on the grass with a book and his cigar, to guard the picnic belongings.

We returned, nearly two hours later, from a long, rough, hot, happy tramp, in high spirits, and as hungry as Jim had described himself to be.

Now I admit, of course, that we were picnickers, wilful, premeditated picnickers, and as such, fair sport for the gods, and deserving of no sympathy; but when our hurried investigations discovered Jim fast asleep, and no food — no, not a crumb — in any basket, we were none the less sunk in despair. Even the lovers looked blue.

"Jim! Sit up, here. What the deuce —" began Mr. Corcoran; and when Jim sat sleepily up, we all stood about him and told him in anguished tones of the robbery which had been committed during his guardianship.

"Oh, no," deprecated Jim, a little bewildered, "I guess nothing's been stolen. I was right here, you know."

A general laugh relieved the tension for a moment. Then Jim exclaimed, "Oh, yes, I remember — I

gave a fellow some stuff. There's plenty left, though," reassuringly. "I never took a thing out of that basket over there."

"No," cried Mrs. Corcoran, wildly, jerking off the lid, "I know you didn't, for there's nothing but napkins and china and silver in it, except some wretched pickles!"

"He was hungry," explained Jim. "Great Scott! I couldn't help but sympathise with a fellow that was starving! I only gave him a square meal."

"'Square meal' must be a very elastic term in Texas," observed Mr. DeWitt, airily.

"Well, he kept liking things, and I kept giving them to him. Then he said he had a wife and six children, and I knew they'd need something —"

"And you'd had your dinner," cut in Mr. Corcoran, morosely.

"So, I reckon I must have given him the rest of the cold grub," finished Jim.

Then, that punishment which fits the crime of picnicking overtook us. We fell out. There was rancour, there were open recrimination and bitterness. We forgot our Christianity, our humanity, our manners, and were as abusive as picnickers always are when their fate meets them, in whatever guise is predestined, — rain, a fall in the water, a basket containing the can-opener and the cork-screw left at home, or a wrong road taken by the self-appointed guide and leader.

In this slough of shame and degradation, Mr. DeWitt showed much the decentest of the lot of us; his worst gibes were only mildly sarcastic, not brutally abusive like those of the others; and at the

last he laughed, lit a cigar, and, smoking, held his peace.

The dancing rapier of his light raillery was as a harmless toy beside the assaults of Mr. Corcoran's sulky broadsword, Jim's defensive axe, Mrs. Corcoran's javelins, my club, or Genevieve's vast and well-planted chunks of sodden truth.

Casting these enormous, dense, moist missiles copiously, and as untiringly as would a powerful piece of mechanism, Genevieve presently swamped and utterly squelched the whole uprising. We were glad to withdraw with life and breath and hearing. We were, all and singular, absolutely shut up. I looked upon the girl with admiration not untinctured with awe. Never before had I conceived the force of the saying that Truth is mighty and will prevail, as I did now, watching Genevieve sling, like some terrible brazen android, these great slabs of cold, soggy fact.

Mr. DeWitt sat apart on a hospitable-looking stump, serenely smoking, but undeniably finding a delicately malicious enjoyment in the whole shindy and its curious extinguishment.

During the fray, which may be characterised as "the late uncivil war," Bushrod Floyd had done what was possible to pacify all parties. He backed Jim's assertions, till Mrs. Corcoran let go the real offender, turned upon Bushrod tartly, and suggested that, although he never ate at all, — a most unkind allusion to his bulk, — he might have some consideration for us, since we were mere material people, and actually lived upon food.

Hastening to enroll himself under her banner, he received some grumbling assaults from Jim. At-

tempting to agree with Mr. DeWitt, we all attacked him; and, his courteous pacifications getting in the way of Genevieve's catapult, he was quite buried under the precision of her accusations.

When the clash of arms sank into silence, Mrs. Corcoran said *at* Jim:

"Well, I've got some more of what you call 'cold grub' at home. I think we would better go there and get it. I feel quite weak with hunger." And we all climbed into the hated patrol-wagon in gloomy silence, and drove back toward home.

The lovers gazed wanly into each others' eyes as they went up over the big red wheel. Poor babes! They hadn't chirped since the cloud of calamity burst upon our heads.

Bushrod begged plaintively the privilege of sitting beside me. "It's the old story of the man and the boy and the donkey," he said sadly, "who tried to please everybody and pleased nobody."

"And you are the donkey, I suppose," added Mrs. Corcoran, coarsely.

And in this very low spiritual state we began our return drive, publishing to any one who had cared to observe, how little the human animal, when hungry, differs from the (supposedly) more greedy and violent of his four-footed brethren.

Jim and Mr. Corcoran sat in front as before, Jim driving. Entire good feeling began visibly to grow again between the two big, honest, forthright male creatures; but Mrs. Corcoran and I, at the tail end of the vehicle, opposite each other, gazed at Jim's broad shoulders and exchanged Masonic glances expressive of our common hungry resentment and unabated rancour. The lovers sat in piteous, Mr.

DeWitt in philosophic, silence; Genevieve, though hushed for the moment, plainly ready to burst out fulminating more bulk truth upon the least provocation.

We crossed the river and were just driving away from the ferry, when we met a handsomely appointed victoria. I caught, at the moment, only the flashing silver mounting of the turnout, the rich liveries, and a beautiful parasol. We had nearly passed the equipage, when I saw a signalling hand wave from it, and Jim drew up with his usual skill. Then I discovered Miss Salem's smiling face beneath the chifons of the parasol; and beside her — Frank.

Miss Salem was a person whom it was ever pleasant to meet, the more, rather than the less so, if you were in a mess; for she herself was always in the conventionally correct path, and ready to lend a hand, or failing that, to at least be sympathetic and heartily amused at whatever was toward.

I had just leaned forward, laughing, to a position whence I could see and speak to her, when I caught sight of Mr. DeWitt's countenance. He had instantly drawn back, and the expression on his flushed face was one of displeasure and embarrassment. Evidently, he would have been glad to escape the encounter. Why? I wondered in blank surprise.

"I believe you people have been picnicking!" called Miss Salem, gaily. "How delightful!"

"Yes, isn't it?" cried Mrs. Corcoran, feverishly, from behind me, bending around my shoulder to smile at her friend, then glancing anxiously at Miss Bucks, as though fearing that *enfant terrible* might

make a sudden revelation of our fallen state, all in a few words.

"Quite a family party," added Frank, glancing with hostile eyes to where Bushrod and I sat, quiet, content, the only really peaceful people in the assemblage.

"Why, yes," returned Mr. Corcoran, "the office is pretty well represented."

I saw Miss Salem's glance travel to Mr. DeWitt, who had not spoken at all; and I, too, looked at him. Then, while she turned to Mr. Corcoran and gave him the message which she had stopped us to deliver, I continued to study the face of my editor. Put out, thrown off his habitual balance, as he was, his countenance seemed to me to reflect like a mirror his whole mental attitude. We were a parcel of employés (employés! hated word — red rag to the bull of American independence), in a hired livery turnout, halted before the elegant carriage of the rich stockholders. He was embarrassed, angry, resentful. He hated the position which, in his own mind, he had assigned to us.

"Well," I thought, "we must all have our weaknesses." Here was one who could come with unruffled grace through the ordeal of that dreadful picnic; and he was finding galls, wounds without cause, in a fancied humiliation, a mean little sordid thought, which had touched no one else in the whole party — least of all, Miss Salem.

He sat silent and glum throughout all the excitement of our subsequent terrible adventure, and I saw no reason, then or thereafter, to alter my conclusion.

We drove through the body of town, mile after



mile, in almost complete silence, and were going along up Ninth Avenue, approaching the region of the park, when there burst upon the Sunday quiet a sudden clang and clattering, and with the sharp sounding of a gong, a police patrol-wagon dashed down the avenue, stopped a moment to take in a disfigured man, a screeching, protesting woman, and three or four white-hatted officers, turned and drove up the avenue ahead of us.

Then there was performed before our eyes one of the great city's tricks of prestidigitation: Where not a soul had been seen, a crowd collected, whose component units materialised out of void space. They evolved. They were transformed out of the viewless gases of the atmosphere. From the unregarded vapours of air were they made manifest. They produced themselves spontaneously out of sheer emptiness. From the very heart of blank nothingness they sprang, full-grown, and clamorous with inquiry.

The patrol-wagon, with its ugly freight, went rapidly up the avenue.

Then it became apparent that we had not tasted the full bitterness of the cup appointed to us. The sight of the speeding team ahead was to Jim what the smell of battle is to the nostrils of a war-horse. He straightened himself like a plains Indian; he forgot everything; his surroundings melted away from him; there remained but one object in life — to pass that team in front. He leaned forward and laid the whip across his flying horses. They jumped ahead, they held their own, and we hung persistently upon the wheel of the fleeing patrol-wagon. The

policemen looked around at us and grinned. We ourselves smiled a little, at first.

But we soon found that this had been a notable arrest, for the avenue was lined, block after block, with curious spectators, and it was their frank and outspoken comments which first awakened us to the fact that we were occupying a position of loathsome prominence in the pageant.

“That’s the McGuire gang in the second section,” cried a fellow at the curbstone.

An old Irishwoman standing in front of a saloon shook her fist at the officers. “Yez hain’t got me, this time!” she yelled. They replied cordially, and as our wagon came abreast of her she greeted us, “Luk at ’em, the murtherin’ divils, in the’r foine clo’es!”

“This is horrible,” gasped Mrs. Corcoran, “like a bad, bad dream. Oh, try to stop him!”

But it was useless remonstrating with the blue serge expanse of Jim’s back; he was demoniacally possessed, deaf to our entreaties, blind to our shameful position, and impervious to pinches and frantic lunges from umbrellas.

Mr. Corcoran refused to interfere. He sat there beside Jim, and laughed until he wept. The great tears bounced out of his eyes, skipped down his cheeks, and hopped into his beard, giving him the appearance of a very penitent criminal indeed.

We tore ahead now as in a nightmare. The crowds along the curbstone surged and gaped and discussed. Windows were flung up, and immediately filled with delighted spectators. They commented upon our good clothes, our morning-glorified hats — which we had trimmed so blithely for the festive

occasion — they thrust their tongues in their cheeks and gibed at us; they were sympathetic, ironical, expostulatory, abusive, and altogether happy.

At last — at last — the welcome turning of Seventy-fourth Street appeared ahead. Respite was at hand!

But, no, it was not to be.

When that horrible Juggernaut, whose big red wheels were grinding over our heart-strings and our self-respect, came abreast of the opening through which our agonised eyes saw escape and safety, it swung around the corner and swept into the quiet street in advance of us!

Thus were we escorted to the very door of our respectable home, brought back from our picnic by a patrol-wagon, a squad of police, and a hooting mob!

I should have been sure our neighbours would enjoy it. But we were not obliged to depend upon mere moral certainty. Their pleased surprise was made entirely manifest.

## CHAPTER XX.

### The Breaking Gulf

"Ah, do not tear away thyself from me!  
For know, my love, as easy mayst thou fall  
A drop of water in the breaking gulf  
And take unmingled thence that drop again  
Without addition or diminishing,  
As take from me thyself and not me too."

WHEN I remembered that moment in the office, when Frank had stood confronting me, looking from Bushrod to me with angry, hostile eyes, and sneering lip; and that other encounter, on our way home from the picnic; when I thought of the fierce resentment and hatred that had torn at my heart, the belief was forced upon me that Frank and I had come to the end of all things between us. Even apart from these occurrences, work on the big book under the most untiring of taskmasters had grown to be intolerable. Whether it was the work itself, or Frank's jealous affection that was like a leg-chain, I was too wearied to say. It appeared to me that I never drew a free breath in those days. I was always inordinately expectant, or disproportionately disappointed.

Poor Bushrod! he, I knew, saw the whole thing. Of course eyes like his would read such a situation as though it had been print, and then he too had

been under that iron will — that steely disfavour. He knew what it was to have his best rejected because it had been offered when his cousin's mood was unpropitious. But most of all, he knew what it was to have, when writhing under self-condemnation, the weight of Frank's displeasure added.

Monday and Tuesday I did not see Frank at all. And all that time the question asked itself in my heart, "What now?" On Wednesday afternoon I came to a place in my work where I must have a note-book which was lying in my table drawer in the little studio. "As well now as later," I said to myself, and took a Broadway car down to Tenth Street.

When I walked quietly in at the studio door, my partner was standing by that table with that drawer open, and upon his face was the expression of a woman who has unearthed a nest of young mice. Before him, unfolded and scattered, was a little bunch of Bushrod's verses, which had been, from time to time, given me.

They were none of them those rhymes I had first read, but were all — under whatever title and in whatever guise — addressed to one person. They breathed utter devotion; they voiced passionate sadness. There was nothing asked, nothing expected in any of them; but a heart was laid bare to you with all its love, with all its longing, to make such plea as it might.

"For heaven's sake! What is this mess of trash?" cried Frank, indicating the manuscript with his pencil, at some little distance, as though it were indeed the unexpectedly found vermin.

I had afterward no knowledge of how I reached

the table and my rifled drawer. "Who opened it?" I asked, and my voice came strange to my ears.

Frank felt himself, of course, wholly in the wrong in this matter. But in those days, to be in the wrong meant to Frank to fight harder, to go further, to do more, in the same line.

"I opened it," he told me. "I was looking for a rubber of mine which you borrowed the other day. It was a special size, and I happened to need it. I saw that fellow's handwriting, and I took the stuff out and read it—as much of it as I could stand. I never dreamed of any one being such an idiot."

"You read it!" I repeated.

"Had I not a perfect right to read it?" he demanded. "Will you deny that I had a perfect right to read it?"

"Just as much right as you have to go down to the office and open Mr. DeWitt's desk and read his private correspondence," I returned, steadily.

"Justin DeWitt is not a woman, and I am not going to marry him," he retorted.

"Nor are you going to marry me!" I cried. "I would sooner be dead—oh, I would sooner die right now!—than look forward to a lifetime passed with such a man as you, Frank." Then, in silence, I began gathering up poor Bushrod's verses. For once, I gained, and by that means, the upper hand.

"Were those things addressed to you?" asked Frank, as I still uttered no word.

"It is a matter which certainly does not concern you," I returned.

"It does not concern me?" he inquired. "Not concern me that a creature like that should presume

to address in such terms the woman I am going to marry!"

"Frank," I said, "that is the second time you have made that assertion, and I tell you again it is not true."

He caught my wrist and pulled me toward the light. "Are you in love with that — that *thing*?" he demanded, fiercely.

I had about gotten my belongings together when he spoke. Now, as he released me, I pushed them into the drawer, all excepting the verses, which I retained in my hand. I could send for the stuff later. At present, my chief anxiety was to get away while I could make a decently composed exit.

"That thing, as you call him," I said, "has more real love for me, and more respect, than you ever had, and I will not hear you speak so of him. You should be ashamed to speak to him as you do. It's all over between us, Frank. This is final. But you need not blame him. The trouble did not come through him. It is yourself who have given a final answer to the whole question. And I thank God that you have at last left me no shadow of alternative — not the least little loophole where a decent self-respect would allow me to crawl back!"

If I had looked for one spark of relenting, I should have been disappointed. Before, when we had quarrelled, there had been no jealousy in it, or, at most, the jealousy had been abstract. Now, I was to see that side of Frank's character which was bitterest and narrowest.

"Oh, the unutterable pettiness of it all!" I cried. "In love with him! I must be that — must I? — before I can treat a fellow creature kindly!"

The door was swung open and the old pencil vender, with whom and at whom we had often laughed, put his head into the room.

"Want a pencil to draw 'er picture with? There's a hundred pictures of her and a thousand love letters to her in the lead of every one of 'em. Better buy a bunch. You'll never be tired of looking at the pictures, and she'll never be tired of reading the letters."

He pushed his way into the room, and under cover of his importunity, I put Bushrod's despised verses into an envelope and prepared to depart.

I felt deeply that it was a pitiful outcome to such a scene. I knew that I should have defended myself and the poor absent one, whose pathetic devotion had been made the subject of bitter jest and taunt; but I was silently following in the wake of the departing pencil man, when Frank's voice recalled me.

"Do not go," he said; "you and I will never have a better opportunity to talk these matters over and settle them, than here and now."

I turned back and faced him. "No," I said, "there is no time like the present — if there is anything more to be said. For my part, I have told you that everything is at an end between us, and I mean it. Why then should I listen to your reproaches or you demand my excuses?"

"You put me in the wrong," Frank answered. "I am demanding no excuses. I merely ask — I plead — for some explanation of this thing which has been so strange and so humiliating to me."

I was aghast at the statement. I could scarcely believe that he alluded in these terms to such a pitiful and empty relation as that between his cousin



and myself. And yet I swiftly realised, when I thought of it with such light upon the matter as these verses might give, that to a man of Frank's jealous, overweening pride, the situation might call for some explanation.

"Ask me," I said, "ask anything you like. I am here ready to answer you now." And I added mentally, "I never shall be again."

The permission seemed to daunt my hearer. It appeared that he had no question ready.

"Ever since I saw you two together returning from that famous picnic," he began finally, "I have felt—I have wondered—How long has this thing been going on?"

"What thing?" I inquired steadily.

"Why, this hole-and-corner love-making. This secret spooning, these drivelling rhymes and letters?"

Certainly, now, he had arrived at the extreme of insult. I answered him fiercely, furiously, burningly. I struck with all my mind's power at the spirit behind that white face and those steely eyes bent upon me.

Frank, beside himself, laid half-unconscious hands upon me, so that the shaking of his frame shook me also. And at the utmost mark of my madness, in the very excess and ecstasy of furious resentment, something outside the bruised, stung, scorching, palpitating girl, standing confronting the agony of her life—her heart's tragedy—saw, felt, understood—the man's pain and rage and blindness—saw where he stood, and how he was moved. Something, which was yet myself, too, as truly as this suffering, raging girl was myself, something calm and great

and all-knowing and benignant, had kindness past all words for him and for the rage and pain which made him strike so deep, so deep, the heart he loved.

There was nothing now but to give Frank up; I doubted not for an instant that this never could be mended or patched, as other tiffs and quarrels between us had been. But through it all, this something outside of my own agony talked to me of his suffering. I saw him for an instant as he was, blinded by jealous rage, moved by the most unworthy motives, and yet the man I loved, the man whom I needs must love, as it seemed to me even then, in the depths of my suffering, through all my days.

"Frank," I said at last, "I do not intend to make any explanations to you about Bushrod. Such explanations are not due you. You know that I have often, in the last six months, been miserable and half heartbroken. If it has predisposed me to accept, thoughtlessly, some marks — some expression — of a devotion so utter, a love so selfless that it even suggested no return, the one to whom apologies and atonement are due is Bushrod himself."

I was hurrying on with more, but Frank broke in fiercely, "I find your explanations worse than the offence. You tell me that you have been wretched, these last months. The inference is obvious that I, an overbearing, jealous, insufferable brute, have made you wretched; and Bushrod Floyd — a paragon of all the virtues, of course — has been looked to for comfort. Oh, it is intolerable — it is abominable! When I think of that man's life — the opinion he holds of women — and see him permitted such intimacy with a pure girl

like yourself, I could beg you, even if it were not for my love, even if you cast me off, to deny yourself to him. The one unbearable thought in it all is, not that I must lose you, terrible as that is to me, but that you admit this fellow into the holy of holies in your pure heart, the place where I dreamed no man save I could ever come."

I knew that most of this was simply jealousy and wounded pride. I knew poor Bushrod's peccadilloes and failings. Everybody knew them. They were open as the day to all comers. I was not deceived into believing him the monster Frank would have hinted. I felt, too, that this quarrel, while it had been precipitated by Bushrod's verses, had really nothing to do with any person in the world save Frank and myself. And I tried to put this into words.

"Frank," I said, "it is not Bushrod nor any one else except yourself who causes me to say that I will never go back to that which you call an engagement, and I call abject bondage. I am done with it, once and for ever. As much as I love you, I loathe to think of being bound to you. It is not that you are jealous of Bushrod. If it had not been that, it would have been something else. The thing which comes up, in such a quarrel, is supposed to be a cause. It is not; it is a mere effect. Here, it is the effect of your jealous, overbearing tyranny to which I can not and will not submit."

Frank answered me with a sort of sob in his voice. "Cast me off if you will, dearest; but let me love and protect you still. Promise me—promise that you will never—that such things as this," he pointed with a contemptuous gesture to the package in my

hand, "shall cease. You don't know, you can not know — how should you? — what beasts men can be. The woman I love should be kept in an ivory tower, if I had my will. Oh, Carita, my darling, I have only loved you too well. I would have hedged you about with my care, that no profane thought, even, should come near you."

Again there surged through my soul that kindness for poor Frank — and for myself. I seemed to stand outside — apart — away from it — and see us both, poor children, battling in the dark. Again it shook me hard with a passion of pity and yearning which had almost no kinship with the overwhelming adoration I felt for him.

I might have told him, perhaps, that such love as he spoke of was itself the merciless cruelty of which I complained, but I did not. As he stood before me, pale with feeling, I gazed long at his face — those features which I had studied with a heart full of choking tenderness, with eyes of such blind doting passion; searched with love and pain and despair; the face that had been my sky, my weather, my all; that put itself — with young, crude arrogance — between me and all my aims and purposes; that laid its spell upon me so that, in the teeth of my own knowing better, my captive heart declared there was not one thing in life worth setting against the seeing of that face smile upon me.

Going closer, I said, very low, "There is no fibre of my heart, Frank, that is not utterly yours, whether I am always conscious of it or not. The thought of you fills every waking hour. It underlies everything, colours everything. It seems to me now that, until I met you, I lived only a half life. Whether

the thought of you is sweet and lovely, or only a grief, a cruel pain, I must still return to it.

"It has always been so — always — from the hour you left me in the train at Chicago. I am twenty-five years old, Frank, and not without experience of life; but, at this age, and in this skeptical day, what happened to me was, in the phrase which serves to make us merry, love at first sight. I have never been my own since we sat and talked together that day. That passion, absolute, overmastering, descended upon me. I never grew to love you — no choice was ever left me. I adored, worshipped, longed for you every instant of consciousness. I was ravished away, as though plucked by the fierce hands of love's high priest, and poured out, heart, soul, and body, in passionate love, in tenderness and longing unspeakable.

"You came between me and God and heaven, and every hope and aim and purpose of my life. I tell you, when I look down into my heart, Frank, I see there, since that day we met, only you. There has been in my heart since that day one hope, one longing — to possess its love; one fear, one terror — to lose it. I have known since then but one joy, one good — our agreement, our companionship; one evil, one anguish — separation.

"This is the truth. I tell it you. No woman's pride counsels me to withhold any pitiful part. Because I say that this thought of you, this love for you, which is like a mania, a possession, an addiction, I will be free of; I will, or die; for I would rather die than live and be a slave to it."

In the first part of this speech, Frank had again put out his hands, half consciously, I thought, and

drawn me toward him, so that I both saw the suffusion of his eyes, and felt him yield and shiver when I had laid bare my love for him.

More than once, as I went on, his look had yearned upon me, heart-breakingly, and he had moved, as if to speak. But when I had finished, he loosed my hands, put me coldly and steadily from him, and said, in a voice of quiet bitterness that was like a blade — a white-hot blade — in my heart:

“All this being so, you are certainly quite right — Cara. God only knows — you never can — what it costs me to give you up, my Cara that was, the brightest spirit I have ever known, and mine, I believed, for I always knew I had your heart, my bonny, sunny, pure-souled Cara. But no woman should ever say she was slave to me, to my tender love, or to her own love for me. She should never be anything to me. I tell you, Cara, I would put her from me if it tore the heart from my breast, the light from my life, and God who made us as we are knows it does.”

“You have spoken coals of fire to me. You have made the thought of living with you — which was my earthly symbol of heaven — as dreadful to me as you say the thought of being mine is to you. I only wish I had never to see your lovely face, nor to hear your sweet voice again.”

His cheek grew, if possible, more colourless, his eyes more steely, I could hear his breath catch, and see his nostril flicker as, drawing quite away from me, he dashed these words at me:

“Go now — I do not keep you — I will never while I live ask anything of you again. I only dread to think how small the world is.”

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## CHAPTER XXI.

### A White Night

“ Whither shall our way be whirled —  
Through what vast and awful spaces  
With a white light on our faces  
Spirit over spirit furled ? ”

THEN began the procession of blank, wooden-faced, meaningless, vacant days, and fierce, terrible, sleepless, mad nights.

Through those days I won — and not so ill — by dint of sheer spiritual biceps. I worked unceasingly. I was never idle, never quiet or unoccupied a minute. I did not allow the feverish haste of the mind-sick to lay hold on me; thitherward I knew lay madness. “ Without haste, without rest,” it was with me; and so, I won through the days.

But when the day was done, with its affairs, its labours and activities; when the evening was past and the latest sitter had left me; then, in the solitude and silence of my own room, I faced the alternative, work or bed; and I could not work — not a stroke — and the bed was a terrible thing from which I mentally fled, running, so to say, with my arms over my bent head.

When I finally lay down, in mere exhaustion, the hosts of Pain descended upon me indeed. After what seemed hours of such agonising as I thought



A WHITE NIGHT





must leave my hair white and cut lines deep into my face, I would hurry out of bed, light the gas, and stare wildly around my little room, with a sense of strangeness, as though I had been long away, and it ought to have changed much.

That first terrible night after my parting with Frank, a curious deadly lassitude deceived me into believing that I might sleep. I crept to my rest with thankfulness, and a well-nigh instant unconsciousness seemed to graze me.

Then, almost immediately, I wakened, having barely slept, and started up from bed in a suffocating agony. I threw a dressing-gown around me, and wandered from room to room, reasoning, struggling, trying another room, a different chair, sofa, window, mental attitude, spiritual position.

In my own little sleeping-room, so narrow and stern and dim-lit, the matter pressed hard upon me its one naked, terrible aspect of irrevocable loss. Out in the cheery dining-room, with much gas blazing, flutterings of hope and solace stirred and flitted uncertainly. The robe-hem of Peace seemed once to whisper past me, and the hand of Resignation to touch my head. But so awful was the speed of my soul on these travels, that, as I passed back again to my own room, Despair shut down, down upon me in the chill darkness of the little hallway.

Thereafter, standing cold and dazed at a window, gazing out upon the silence of the street, which looked not to be merely a city street, empty of traffic and void of daylight, but a desolate place forsaken of men and forlorn of God's smile, I heard a little chirruping, fluting note from the room beyond the dining-room — Teddy's royal sleeping apartment.

I found the baby sitting up in a broad streak of moonlight, in his pretty white and gold crib, demanding of the kosmos a "dink," in the notes of a hidden woodland brook.

Glad, thankful, in the lonely isolation of my anguish, to serve some other living thing, I found and brought the desired "dink" to the thirsty baby lips that, after, kissed me with many grateful cooings. Then I sat and held the warm, nestling little thing upon my aching heart till he slept, and stirred in his sleep, fretting against his unusual attitude. I laid him down reluctantly, and went back to that white, moonlighted world which held only me and my desolation.

I had carried home those verses Bushrod had first given me — those he had called a valentine — and put them in my desk, and then forgot them. They had never been opened nor read. It is the fate of some people to have their best thus passed over. Nobody would take pains for poor Bushrod. Why, who should, when he set so fine an example of indifference to himself?

Now (as I roamed from place to place in that species of aberration known to a sleepless night, and which amounts to insanity) reflecting on the later verses which had performed so strange a part in Frank's destiny and mine, I remembered these earlier ones, made a light, drew them out, and read.

FROM AN OLD GRAVE-STONE.

My heart and I on our way had wrought,  
Till our desolate journeyings reached the place  
Of doubt and despair, where all is nought;  
And I stayed, and questioned it for a space,

Saying "Heart, where now shall our steps be turned,  
Now that mine all hath been done and failed?  
I have tried, and followed, and hungered, and yearned,  
And struggled — and what hath the thing availed?  
That which I would not, life brings me to do —  
How is it, my heart, with you?"

Said my heart to me, "You have meant me good,  
But wrought me evil through evil days;  
You fed me on Hope's false smiles for food,  
You have led me far in weary ways.  
And I? O, never, never I found  
My sweet delight, which ever fled;  
I was lonely, I ached like a poisoned wound  
In your breast, and I dragged like lead — like lead.  
Was one day good, when all was done?"  
And I said to my heart, "Not one."

I said to my heart, "There's a quiet place  
That, though it is narrow and dark, indeed,  
Hath room for us in its straitened space,  
Safety, and comfort, and all we need.  
But he who enters that chambered rest  
Must leave his joys, and the light of day;  
And, wrapping its peace about his breast,  
Give him to moulder in dull decay.  
Would you fear that portal, dark and low?"  
"Fear!" said my heart, "Let us go!"

Said my heart to me, "Let us go to that place;  
There is nothing now that I want but Peace.  
There is no joy, no boon, no grace  
So sweet as silence and soft surcease.  
The cruel siren, Hope, may come  
And sing, low leaned to our low stone door.  
But your ears shall be stopped, my pulses dumb;  
She can pierce, and thrill, and delude us no more.  
Will you take me, indeed, to that rest I crave?"  
And I brought my heart to this grave.



Tears of sympathy — of pity — filled my eyes. Bushrod's face came before me, sensitive, gentle, appealing, adoring.

I was aware of building up a fictitious sentiment regarding him. But I felt resentful at Frank's arrogant strength, and sympathetic toward poor Bushrod's weakness and fineness and tenderness. I was strung up to have revenge of Frank for all the poor Bushrods and Caras, and weak loving creatures over whom he walked with ruthless feet.

This feeling was with me when I went down to the office the next afternoon. I knew Frank was to be in Philadelphia that day, so there was no danger of meeting him. Of Bushrod I had no dread; and I was justified. Bushrod's comprehension and sympathy were as gentle, as impersonal and as comforting as the sun's light, or the kindly warmth of a fire to one lost in the cold darkness. It was so to me then and always.

At first, I suffered deeply for sleep. But later, when this agony had lived with me for a week of what in my pain I called idiot days and lunatic nights, it was sleep I feared and dreaded.

For, so long as I was awake, I could defend myself from the worst. But almost instantly upon the coming of sleep, my rebel mind and heart opened the gates of consciousness to the host of sweet, bitter, lovely images and remembrances and dreams of Frank.

The dream that almost slew me in my sleep — that waked me weeping, or cold and shaking and sick, was only a dream of standing dumb, motionless with despair, looking after Frank, my fascinated eyes never leaving him as he walked away — away

— away from me for ever, with that aggressive roll. It was as though I, the body, stood there while the life walked thus away from me, racking me with the agony of death indeed.

From this dream I would start awake, and lie there helpless for pain's myrmidons to work their will upon me.

Air drawn, significant against the dark, there floated before my aching eyes the lovely room, the small disordered place, with the rose (which could never fade) in its vase upon the table; with an immortal Lemuel ambling in and out, pan and brush in hand, and Frank — Frank — my Frank there waiting for me.

There, was rest — there, was relief — there, I might go and say one little word which would change the world for me.

Night after night, as I lay in the dark, my eyes aching for the sleep which was denied them, I was building upon the encompassing gloom, this picture of the little studio.

I would make it a June morning there, with the cry of the street venders and the rumble of the city coming in at the open window; or the dull, dripping close of a September evening, when all within seemed doubly kind and sheltering and sweet.

But whatever hour I set was love's hour, for was not Frank there? I would see him, moving about, carrying my captive heart at every step; or sitting at his work, turning to speak to me, and smile upon me.

My robbed and bankrupt heart remembered the days when it had leaped at passing that threshold, had swelled with such a passion of tenderness that

I would fain have kissed the thumb which crossed the shaft of a newly sharpened pencil he might hand me. Now, cold and spent and aching, it could but build again and yet again its ruined paradise.

I used to fancy that something — some wraith of what I felt — must find its way through that door and stand within that room.

What, I asked myself, would it have met there? Frank loved me, I knew, as I loved him. What was it, then, that kept me from him? I would have braved death itself — did death threaten — to go to him.

But it was not death, it was life which menaced me. When I would have pictured to myself the rapture of going back, of bringing in my poor, pitiful, rebellious provinces, making my submission, asking him to set his sovereign heel upon their necks, of being held again in his arms, his heart beating against mine, the anguish of regret and loneliness and longing past, my lips and eyes and heart fed and comforted, an implacable something within reminded me how brief this bliss had ever been; how almost instantly the clasping arms became chains, and the watchful glances of love, a jailor's jealous eyes.

I said to myself, "It would be so easy. It is so near. Not much time has elapsed. Shall I not some day think of this, aghast to remember that I moved no step to go to him while yet I might? Shall I not pray with strangling tears for this opportunity which now I neglect?"

Yet I knew that, whatever pangs came to me, I should not turn back now — that I must not — could not.

## CHAPTER XXII.

### In the Trough of the Seas

“One word is too often profaned  
For me to profane it,  
One feeling too falsely disdained  
For thee to disdain it.  
One hope is too like despair  
For prudence to smother,  
And pity from thee more dear  
Than that from another.  
I can give not what men call love;  
But wilt thou accept not  
The worship the heart lifts above,  
And the Heavens reject not?”

I WAS at the end of everything, it seemed to me, when, one morning, I went down to the office, with no copy prepared, and no idea where any copy was to come from, almost ready to confess defeat and give up.

When I went in, Mr. DeWitt was not there. Mr. Corcoran, Miss Bucks, Bushrod, and one or two others were standing talking desultorily. I caught Frank's name, and the information that he was gone somewhere on a sudden summons.

None of the others saw me, but Bushrod turned his head instantly as though I had called him. He silently withdrew from the group. Passing his drawing-board, from which he lifted a handful of



sketches, he came at once to me, laid them on his desk, at which I sat, and bending naturally over me, said, quietly :

"Our president is gone home to Virginia. They telegraphed him that his mother — my aunt — is ill."

"Oh," I said, with dry lips.

"I do not imagine it is very serious, or they would have included me in the summons," went on Bushrod, moving the sketches about on the desk before us. "But Frank always fairly worshipped his mother — and she him. Lee — Frank's sister, Mrs. Paige — would be sure to telegraph for him if the least thing were amiss with Aunt Virginia."

I answered mechanically, and Bushrod's kind, low voice ceased. I sat there at the desk with my back to the others, bent over some papers; and all the pain and grief and bereavement of these past weeks went over me in a flood.

There was one longing I could not brook — the longing to see the studio once more. It came now hand in hand with the imperative need to be alone.

Rising, I shut down the desk, resumed my gloves — I had not taken off my hat and coat — and, Mr. DeWitt being not yet arrived, went blindly out, and took a Broadway car up to Tenth Street.

I went up all the flights of stairs checking, struggling, arguing wildly at every step, and arrived at the door, which I could not see for tears, crying inly, "Oh, little door — oh, little, little door! And am I shut out for ever from that before which you stand?"

Trembling and cold, I took out my key, opened and closed the door, and was alone in my poor

abandoned heaven. I stood and looked slowly about.

Each small humble thing in the place had its own knife for my heart. The easel, the brushes, the chair — ah, his working jacket! As I looked at it, sheer longing mastered me. "Oh, where is he?" I whispered. "My God, my God! Is it — can it be true? Can I live and not see him?"

Suddenly, it grew very dark in the room. I reached out my arms gropingly, and just as it seemed the floor yielded and moved in a sickening, sliding way under my feet, the door opened sharply, and some one came quickly in.

"Bushrod!" I cried; and strong arms lifted me to something safe and solid; warm, strong hands held mine, and chafed them.

The darkness swam away, and I sat up by Bushrod. A very convulsion of weeping seized and shook and tore me. I clung to Bushrod's hand, warm and kind and living, my bursting head was leaned against his arm, as he sat beside me. He never spoke at all, only sat by me, and clasped the hand that clung to his.

When the paroxysm had spent itself and me, and I cowered, weak and exhausted, against his big shoulder, I whispered, "How did you know?"

"Forgive me, dear, I followed you," he answered; and then again there fell a long silence between us.

I dared not begin examining, finding fault, blaming myself that I accepted this comfort which might come to me through the grievous wounding of another. I turned in positive fright from any analysis of the situation. I know now, when time has softened it all, left only the sweet and good,

and stolen away everything that was sad and bitter, that what led me astray where Bushrod was concerned was the having of a human creature, a fine, interesting brilliant man, at that, and unapproachably shy to many, offered to me for my own, as a mere stop-gap, to do with as I list — and no return asked. In every adoring look of his big blue eyes, he gave himself, all that he had, all that he was, to my service; or thanked me as for a boon, if I but appeared willing to accept some portion of his gift.

The silence was finally broken by Bushrod beginning, in what tried to be a very cheerful tone, "You have been working too hard, Cara. Don't you think you ought to go about and play a little?"

I sat erect and wiped my eyes. Steadying my voice with a painful effort, "Yes," I said, "I am going to go about and try to amuse myself. And then my work will be good for me again, presently."

Bushrod looked at me wistfully, and said, "DeWitt had come in and was asking for this week's column, when I left the office."

In my misery I had forgotten that such things as columns and syndicate services must go on in the world, however hearts may ache. I rose with a sort of groan. "I have been using up everything in my desk," I said, "and everything in my head and heart so, for weeks, that I don't know what to do. I don't like to beg off, but — it — it looks like failure just now."

Then Bushrod showed me, more than in anything that had gone before, the absolute difference between the two cousins. "I have something here," he hesitated, flushing, fumbling in the breast pocket of his coat, and bringing forth finally a neatly folded

manuscript. "I did it on the typewriter," he added, in some embarrassment, "so that if there is anything in it you can use, it will not need to be re-written."

I opened the sheets and read them. I have said that Bushrod Floyd was a brilliant man. He had caught, with the wonderful fidelity which seemed part of his absorbing tenderness, my exact spirit, just my literary attitude. My "column" — which was usually two or three columns — consisted weekly of stray bits of reflection, description, philosophising, and little stories, humourous and pathetic. It ran under the heading, "The Heart of Things," and was signed, "Young Lochinvar."

"It is a poor parody," my companion deprecated, as he watched me reading. "I have been a sort of moon, to absorb your sunny brightness. Surely now, when you have need of it, I should be able to throw back a pale glimmer of your radiance."

The work in my shaking fingers was exquisite. Fragmentary, and in that sense unfinished, it was; but the divine fire was in it. It seemed a piteous thing that it should be offered to go in a syndicate service — offered in another's name. I said so to Bushrod, but he was only too happy and content in that the beautiful things had pleased me, and smoothed one little wrinkle from my couch of pain.

"Now, that's settled," he said, cheerfully, "and we will plan about going some places, won't we? We shall ride and drive and go all over this big city. Why, the museums, galleries, theatres — everything — everything — has been waiting for us all this time, and the solemn truth is that I have been wait-

ing all my life to go to see — everything — with you."

"What!" I cried, in amazement, "haven't you been to all those places — you who have lived in New York for years?"

"No," he answered, softly and seriously, "never been to one of them — with you. They are all waiting, fresh and undiscovered, for me to find them and look at them through your eyes."

I can blame myself now for accepting this willing service. Then it seemed — he made it seem — a kindness to him. It was always so; he always held it so. He had never any concerns of his own which need be considered, if I would accept him. His cleverness was mine to divert me, his abilities at my call to assist, himself to serve and cheer and comfort and solace — his adoring love to spread beneath my feet, that they need not touch the common earth.

"You always seem to me so poised, so sufficient to yourself, such an independent little person," said the big man, looking at me with his loving blue eyes. "Do you know, I have been wishing ever since I first met you that there would come a tide in your affairs sometime, which would carry you off your feet a little — not drown you at all, but just disturb your balance a bit, and that then it might be given to me to catch you quickly and gently, and set you once more safely on your feet where the tide could not trouble you. To think that such a dream as that should have come true!"

Presently, I was calmed and righted, and we prepared to go down to the office together. "I will help you with these columns for awhile, if you will

let me," Bushrod suggested, hesitatingly, as we rode down-town. "I have a lot of odds and ends knocking about in my desk and in my mind, which you may be able to make use of until you feel more like work. My stuff is just about good enough for newspaper use. It is a shame to see such magnificent matter as you have been giving them used in that way. Do you never feel it so? Do you never want to put it in more permanent form — in a book?"

The thought of the big book, whose last chapters still lay in the table drawer in the little studio, made me heartsick. I suppose my face showed it, for my companion hastened to add, contritely, "Do you feel that I am arrogant and presuming because I dare to think about you so much? Is it overbold for me to be finding paths for your feet? Indeed, dear, I never see myself walking in those paths beside you — I am not such an idiot as that — but I love to make pictures of you strolling right up the mountain of success to the temple of fame with its big white dome."

That such an atmosphere as this was balm to one who had been abraded by the chains of Frank's exacting, possessive affection, needs not be said. Now, as we rode down-town together, we were planning outings and planning work, each trying desperately to make believe to himself and the other that this was a natural and reasonable state of affairs.

"I have always been a lonesome old fellow," said Bushrod, "always until you came. And now, if you are three days out of the office, I nearly perish just of stark loneliness and longing to have a sight of you."

And after this day, I set out upon the many days and weeks when Bushrod Floyd cared for and sustained and shielded me as a mother might an ailing child; when he wrote my column for me, or encouraged and coaxed and helped me to write it; when he scanned my appearance with a guarded solicitude which caused no embarrassment, managed that Genevieve should drag me about to things I did not wish to do or see, yet which served to divert me somewhat from my misery; when he developed a habit of being upon imaginary errands, that he might go with me from the office to the car, or timidly sought to please and coax me into stopping with him for a bit of lunch, or to eat some fruit, pleading that he was hungry and could not eat alone.

I was drugged, sinking under the opiate of despair; and he worked with the desperate eagerness of the physician or nurse who keeps such an one moving, that the life-blood may not stagnate.

That I was never afraid nor ashamed of what I accepted from him is not true; and yet he made it so natural, so simple, so inevitable, that I felt less uneasiness than would have seemed possible. It was generally a pretext of work, or exercise, or some outing that brought us together, and it was only occasionally that he said things which showed me the enormity of my fault.

I remember once, when he had made such a speech, his looking round at my face of dismay and saying to me, "Can you be patient with a man who is sometimes waked in the night with the dew of fear upon his face — fear that he may not hold such daily companionship, such favour as you are now giving him? Forgive me. Could I be more of a

dolt than to admit that to you? It sounds as though I felt you were promising me something, when, God knows, my only longing is that you will allow me to give all, and never trouble your dear head about it, except to think how kind you have been to me in receiving it."

I was not altogether blinded by my own suffering. I knew I was building ill, and tried feebly to demur, to withdraw a little, but it was long, and long too late.

When I began to speak, Bushrod's eyes dilated upon me with love and pain and fear. "No, no, Cara," he protested, "you are wholly free; no shadow of a tie or obligation binds you anywhere. You need me a little now, and it is my only happiness. To lose this privilege of seeing and being near and serving you — I — I cannot — well, there is no need, you know, dear.

"What I feel is not the desire of a man blind from his birth, who longs for the sunshine, the precious gift of sight. That might have been the way before you came. Now, to lose my chance of doing something for you, and being with you, would be to endure the agony of one who had loved the light and all it gave, and who has the terror of seeing it taken away, and his soul left in a darkness that is all he will ever have."

"Bushrod," I said, "I am — I suppose I am not just well, and I am very unhappy. You — nobody knows or understands as you do; nobody else can help or — Bushrod, do you think I may — I ought —"

"Indeed, I know you may, and ought," he declared, cheerily. "Let's be done with all such talk,



and go on to our work and play, accepting what the gods send daily. We shall all — all — be rich and famous and happy by and by.”

So I said no more, and Bushrod’s love and care, his belief and help and encouragement, led me back to my life and its labours and opportunities, as a mother’s hand leads a tottering little child.

I went down to the office one day, and was received by Mr. DeWitt with unexpected geniality.

“These last things of yours are superb, Miss West,” he said. “I really think they are the best work you have done since you came to New York.”

Bushrod Floyd was standing by his desk, and he stole a furtive, humourous look at me, as of a detected culprit. I had opened my lips to tell Mr. DeWitt the origin of most of the brilliance in my recent productions, when Bushrod, evidently expecting something of the sort, hastened to praise it in such glowing terms (all the while looking at me with side-glances of defiance), that I was estopped from giving any information on our mutual work.

## CHAPTER XXIII.

### A Spartan Three

"You are dying for me, and I am dying for another."

It had always been that when I was heartsick and well-nigh despairing, I knew of no method by which I might help myself except to build up the health of that portion of my soul which is visible and palpable — my body. My cure for a heartache was a long walk, or a bit of vigorous exercise taken, for preference, with agreeable companionship.

Despite all the difference between Genevieve and myself, all the wide and marked divergences of taste, feeling and belief, there was one meeting-ground upon which our souls could fraternise.

Whether she thought as I did about the value of exercise or no, it is certain that an unquiet heart drove her forth as it drove me, and when we found ourselves owning a bit of coincident leisure we went to a gymnasium of which she knew, and where she was undergoing a very complicated "course," or we took long walks.

To the company of these latter, Bushrod Floyd was, upon his diffidently put forward plea, admitted. He would fain have given no reason for his desire to join us "whenever we could put up with him;" but Genevieve having demanded one in her usual

inexorable fashion, he stated that sitting all day over a drawing-board was making a second Fat Boy of him, and it was a question between this and banting.

So we three poor souls, each with his little fox gnawing at heart, bearing the nips as best we might, covering the pain with such smiles and jests as we could, tramped long miles together.

Did you ever consider the enormous psychological significance of certain very simple actions? Take for instance the looking out at windows, and the going upon long, aimless walks. Who that is content or happy ever falls into either of these practices?

It is generally the miserable woman, who may not go forth to accost Fate, who must sit at home till the event comes battering at her door with its great brutal bludgeon, who haunts casements, who goes from one sill to another and gazes drearily forth to behold, if she may, the solution of the dilemma approaching.

As for aimless walks, women, too, take most of them. There are other methods of relief in action open to men.

We were, in spite of our incongruity, a congenial trio, agreed upon more matters than merely a state of mind which made long walks salutary.

We found, as the acquaintance ripened, much to love and admire in each other. We saw, now, that none of the people at the office knew Miss Bucks.

Bushrod and I discussed together the astonishing fact that Genevieve wore rubbers, and a trailing skirt which she carried tightly gripped, and so raised as to impede every step. We agreed that such a course upon her part destroyed that cherished one

of our illusions which concerned the wearing by Englishwomen of thick-soled shoes and short skirts.

"Miss Bucks," he ventured one day, "I thought English ladies didn't wear rubbers. I imagined they called them galoshes, and scarcely stooped to own a pair."

"Galoshes!" she returned sharply, rounding those mild light eyes at both of us. "Pray, why should I call gum overshoes galoshes? And why should I not wish to keep my boots tidy, and my feet dry, because I am an Englishwoman?"

And he hastily admitted that there was no sufficient reason.

"Fancy!" she continued to mutter, "galoshes!"

I am not a fish, like Genevieve; I must come up to blow; and I had, in the midst of my misery, spells of wild gaiety — almost hilarity. That I was trying to her at these seasons, I well know; but I think, too, that I must have done her good by diverting her mind from one unresponsive young man.

As for Bushrod, it was worth while to counterfeit high spirits, only to see how absolute was his content on such occasions.

There were moments when I was even exuberant enough to forget myself and whistle. Of course this only happened two or three times, away up in the remote solitudes of Harlem, or on some secluded, pensive, and policemanless pathway in the park. I always stopped it the instant I realised what I was doing; for though Genevieve commanded herself nobly I was entirely alive to her anguish on such occasions.

One day, having caught myself at this "exces-

sively ungenteel " performance, and stopped with instant contrition, I inquired earnestly :

" Miss Bucks, what on earth do you suppose you would do if I should ever be able to sufficiently forget myself — or forget New York — to indulge in a real Yazoo yell? "

" I'll tell you something," returned Genevieve abruptly, and with a preternaturally wise side glance at Bushrod. " The only really wild and alarming things I've ever observed in you are your threats! In the matter of actual behaviour, there is very little really discreditable about you." And she looked us both straight in the face with the utmost blandness.

While we hesitated, our glances inquiring wildly of each other if it were possible Genevieve could mean to be sarcastic or clever, and if not, what then? she continued, " But a Yazoo yell — what is that? "

I examined her face and her tone of voice critically, decided that my suspicion was a mad one, and replied :

" A Yazoo yell, Miss Bucks, is not a thing you describe, you just do it. Shall I show you how? "

" Oh, no, thank you. I — "

" Miss Bucks," I continued, feelingly, " did you never yell at all? "

" Why, yes, certainly, as a small child, I used to be quite a little savage, I'm sure. I had no sisters, so I ran rather wild with my four hobbledehoy brothers. I remember that when we played ' Red Indian ' we howled fearfully."

" Well, and weren't you much happier and healthier for it," I pursued, intensely, " than you've ever

been since the trammels of social usage were fastened upon you, and — ”

“ Oh, nonsense! ” broke in Genevieve, briskly. “ I suppose she is chaffing, as usual; isn’t she, Mr. Floyd? Certainly I was a happy little heathen, as a youngster; and certainly I loved bread and treacle, and to race about and howl. And now I’m a moderately successful and discontented woman, and no longer care for treacle or howling; but I see no direct connection.”

“ Yet, it is there! ” I cried, feelingly. “ I tell you I have a theory on the subject.”

(“ I do not doubt it,” murmured Genevieve. “ If you had not, it would be the first subject you failed to fit with a theory.”)

I looked at her in amazement. There was no denying that Genevieve was blossoming out. What was the developing influence, I wondered — the DeWitt affair, or our stimulating society? But I continued, with dignity:

“ My belief is, Miss Bucks, that yelling — a small amount, at least, of daily yelling — subserves some excellent purpose in the physical economy, promotes some important life function; and that in the man or woman who never yells, who never utters a hearty shout, something droops and pines into harmful desuetude. I am convinced that no tribe or community of people can entirely abjure and cease from all yelling without paying the natural penalty. Indeed, I am at this moment, in my own proper person, an example — a living illustration — of the evil effects which follow the sudden and complete breaking off of this joyous and healthful habit. It has now been months — months — since I uttered

anything approaching a hearty, spirit-lifting yell; and I tell you I feel it.

"I feel it; and I would have in all cities — just as I would have baths and gymnasiums — space devoted to this cheerful, agreeable, and important exercise; yelleries, you might call them, or shoutatoriums, attractive places where one might go to shout as a simple health measure, or to have a yell with a friend, with no suspicion of the ridiculous attaching to one, but all in seemliness and as a matter of course."

I saw Genevieve screwing up her mouth, preparatory to giving me a good setting down. I decided I would not have any setting down that day; so I continued in a much louder and more enthusiastic tone,

"Why, this thing develops as one considers it. It unrolls, it opens up undreamed-of possibilities. Why not yelling contests with judges and a crowd, like the Olympian games, you know?"

And Bushrod added, "Why not progressive yelling matches, with prizes and consolation prizes?"

Genevieve was silent, but not sulky — she never sulks. She simply confessed herself beaten, and we went on amicably to other things.

"Miss Bucks!" I announced suddenly one day, when we were sloshing around in what she told me was very bad form and high spirits in that gymnasium where we do a morning's work twice a week, "Miss Bucks! I know now why fellows swagger who cultivate their muscles instead of their brains."

"Because they are usually that sort of fellows," returned Genevieve, with her strange, heavy, British coldness. It was always startling to me to see Gene-

vieve so cold mentally when she was so warmed up physically — her face flushed like a great pink cabbage rose, her pale, tan-coloured eyes fairly glowing with red-brown light. When the blood's in *my* head like that, whether from dancing, or racing my horse or my wheel, swinging clubs or — no matter — whatever brought it there, when it's there like that, why I could kill people, or love 'em to death, or die to save 'em.

"Yes," I said, "it is because they are that sort of fellows. I don't wonder, nor blame them a bit. I smile, to myself, every time I see one of them, and I say, 'Yes, I know. So would I, if only I dared.' It is being a woman and having to dress as women dress, alone, that deters me. The impulse — the good will — is there."

"Yes, I fear it really is," put in Genevieve, primly.

"Yes, you're precious right," I retorted. "I tell you, when the blood runs through my veins laughing and singing and whistling, the limitations of civilisation, social conventionalities, may — and do — oblige me to look and walk and speak demurely, but —"

"Oh, no; they don't seem to oblige you to —" began Genevieve, but I walked right over her. "But it is no more than an outward seeming, an enforced tribute to the powers that be. My body may walk, but my spirit dances; the flesh may deport itself civilly and discourse seemly, according to the canons of society; but the soul chucks its hat on the back of its head, its hands in its pockets, kicks up its heels, and shouts aloud!"

Genevieve opened her mouth to say something. I



knew by experience what it would be like, so I burst in ahead of her. "Good heavens! Miss Bucks, is it common among English people to be so absolutely fishlike? Or is it only a personal, not a national peculiarity? S'death, and zounds, and gadzooks! I'd rather suffer; I'd rather have ups and downs, and awful times, and — and — *fits* — than to be such a positive *fish*!"

Genevieve said one single word. This word was "Humph!" and she looked so significant that I felt a little uncertain of my ground.

But to return to this business of physical activity.

"I long ago discovered," I told Genevieve, "that circulation — enough circulation — is, seriously, the remedy for all the ills of life. I know that it will cure indigestion, headache, heartache, despondency, despair! And, I dare say, hydrophobia, leprosy, pessimism, remorse, bankruptcy, and annihilation, if it were only given a fair trial. I am convinced in my own mind that it was the *Nepenthe* of the clever Greeks, that potion which rocked asleep all sorrow and disappointment, and gave the sick and wounded heart health and peace. And it was their *Lethe*, as well; the pulsing stream in whose renewing currents all past griefs and failures are forgot, all future joy and success are made possible."

"It must indeed be so, if you say so," she replied, "for I have noticed that you seem to know a vast deal about ancient matters, rather especially the Greeks and other classical persons and things."

This was little short of brutal on Genevieve's part, in view of my very limited and, so to say, third-hand acquaintance with the classics, and the fact

that she, a Girton girl, had a rich and ample knowledge thereof. But I could not blame her.

"Well," I said, "I at least know by actual personal experiment that when you have kicked for five minutes at a bit of paper stuck up on the wall at about the height of your ear, hitting it one time out of ten, losing your shaky balance, at an average, every third kick, and falling back in fits of laughter on to a mattress humanely placed there for the purpose, until every pulse in your body bounds, you don't care a fillip whether the wind's in the east or west; and you wonder with good-natured amusement what thing it was — what little, sneezy, contemptible thing — that hurt and fretted you so yesterday. You would not wish to hit the world too hard, for fear you might hurt it; but you want it to keep a mighty civil tongue in its head, and do you about right."

"You mean that *you* feel that way," corrected Genevieve, still fishily cold.

"Yes, I suppose I do," I admitted. "I can't reasonably mean that you do."

But despite Genevieve's lack of enthusiasm — which lack I am sure she exaggerated when she discovered that it afflicted me — she continued to be to me an interesting and, in some sense, congenial companion, because she was simplicity and genuineness incarnate; and then she was so fine in all these physical activities, and, in her queer, depressed way, so perennially fond of them, so ready for, and interested in them.

Miss Salem's New York house was now in the hands of repairers, renovators, decorators, and furnishers, and she had been for some weeks at one of

the most splendid of the up-town hotels. Here she invited me to spend a week with her. I lived that week, quite soothed and steadied and at my best — so it seemed to me — in her pleasing society, during my leisure time. Miss Salem's aura was certainly a benign one, if that is a proper characterisation of an aura.

To my mind, the great modern American hotel is a place of rest, comfort, and beauty, with its big spaces, and its consummate perfection of service. There, if you please, one might think and write.

A repose like that which dwells in the groves of the oracle pervades its private rooms, back of thick stone or brick walls, admitting upon the one side only a diminished echo of the city's noise through deeply embrasured, heavily draped windows; and, on the other, abutting upon the beautiful silence, the dim, calm twilight and spacious airiness of the long, velvet-floored corridors.

It was here in Miss Salem's great palace of a hotel that I made the acquaintance of a cunning contrivance called the teleseme, a glorification and blossoming of the sober little electric bell. It was a very wonderful thing, I then thought. Its benignant face beamed upon me from its station on the wall beside my door. At first I was only interested, then a bit incredulous, and finally, too happy for words.

I read attentively all around its dial, whereon are printed the names of nearly all the things a sick or weary body might desire. There were set forth food and refreshment, both bodily and mental. Sweet waters and bitter waters of all sorts were there, one might say, suggested. Salutary draughts and sinful intoxicants, by the pint or quart, were

offered, with great number and variety of persons to do almost any bidding. I read the directions, too, printed up strongly as they were in red, instructing the guest to turn the crank until its end rests over the name of the thing he desires, then press the button and the order will be filled at once.

When I read these directions the rapturous anticipation of Aladdin flooded my fancy. "Now — oh, now — shall I have my heart's dear wish!" I thought. "They can not have omitted so important a thing. Why, it is what we all want; the uncommunicated yearning which drives us all, restless, unsatisfied seekers up and down the earth. Where all wants have been so thoughtfully anticipated, they will never have overlooked the great want. 'Tis but to turn the crank, press the button, a moment of waiting, and I shall kiss the lips of my desire."

Again I read round and round that dial that held so much I did not want; but, ah, it was not there! And in the face of this bitter disappointment, buttered toast seemed a mockery and sherry cobbler little better than an insult.

"Not there, not there, my child!" No, it wasn't there any more than it has ever been anywhere else. Or — "But, no, I will not do that," I declared, "I will not accuse and discredit and cripple the future — my beautiful, beautiful, capable, copious, fruitful, omnipotent, omnibus future, where I know that 'it,' and all other good things, are waiting eagerly for me to be brave enough and good and deserving enough to come and get them. And (to be honest and just) I understand that if what I thought I wanted wasn't printed on the teleseme's face, and ready for me at the other end of the line, it is because

the prizes and rewards are (very properly) not distributed before the races are half run, or the tasks half accomplished."

On Friday my weekly "stunt" was due. There was no Bushrod to help me out; he had been sent away by the house, on a business matter, at the time I came to Miss Salem. And Thursday evening found me alone in our beautiful apartments, the reluctant entertainer of an uproarious and cataclysmal headache, writing away at my story, *à la Catherine* — I cannot remember just what Catherine — signing — her will, I believe — some state document, anyway, propped up with pillows and things.

I had got into the midst of a sentence where various parts of speech fought hand to hand, verbs, substantives, and adjectives, all in one furious and unseemly scrimmage, when the door opened softly, and Genevieve walked in. She shut the door behind her, came over and looked down at me quietly, and remarked, "I knew it!"

"How?" I inquired seriously, grabbing my head between my two hands and looking up at her with a bloodshot eye.

"Oh, I simply know things sometimes," she returned, smiling — for once Genevieve smiled and I — I could not.

"Genevieve," I began, and Miss Bucks started a little, and looked keenly at me; "Genevieve," and my head crashed like smitten cymbals — "this picture you may not recognise. It is Catherine What's-her-name, signing her what-you-call-it. It resembles a Chinese play, in that only the chief actor is on the stage. All the scenery and accessories are left to the imagination of the audience — that's you, you

know. So the weeping lords and ladies, the attendant vassals, the impossible greyhound and cataleptic priest may be filled in to your fancy. They are at the other end of the teleseme, Genevieve — you see the teleseme up there — along with the Hot Waffles, Cold Turkey, the Waters of Pleasantness and the antidotal Waters of Bitterness, the Letter, the Time of Day, the Private Maid, and Milk Punch. Oh, Genevieve, Genevieve! My head must inevitably explode. But I'm going to get out this week's copy, alive or dead — Oh!"

Miss Bucks made me no immediate reply. She looked long at me with what I must describe as a sort of affectionate contempt. Then she gathered the litter of books, papers, "copy" and writing tools off the bed, smoothed out its convulsed and distraught draperies, straightened me up, shaded all the light off me, took into her own hands the clip and pencil with which I had been wrestling and, sitting down beside me, remarked in a quiet, reflective voice:

"You poor thing, you are partially crazy with your headache; but I fancy it will not make any difference. So, to put it in your own chaste style, 'Fire away with your stuff,' if Mr. DeWitt must have it to-morrow. I will take it down in shorthand and type it for you."

I shut my eyes, and fired away promptly and continuously, thanking heaven for this kind heart, these capable hands and wits.

When I made an end, Miss Bucks laid down the finished work, came and bathed my head, and did it up soothingly in cool wet things. Then she observed,

"It is very singular. You went through all that stuff smartly enough. It doesn't seem to me any madder than most of the things you write. Yet, when I came in, you were — well, you didn't really know me. How are you feeling now?"

I blushed, and my first impulse was to equivocate. But I strangled it, and taking the cool, kind hand upon my head in my own, I said, "No, Miss Bucks, I knew you perfectly. It was only that, in the distraction of this deafening, blinding pain, I inadvertently called you by the name I gave you the first time I ever saw you. I" — and I looked up resolutely — "I always call you Genevieve, to myself. You never were anything but Genevieve to me;" and I paused anxiously.

"Fancy!" she commented, but very gently; then laughed a sweet little full-throated laugh. "How odd! But it is quite like you. I don't mind in the least, you know."

She sat there for some time, holding my hand, bathing my head. And slowly, slowly quieted down the uproar and anguish inside my skull. When it got to be that I could talk with some ease, I said,

"If you'll sit a bit nearer here, I'll tell you a little thing which runs in my mind."

Genevieve drew her chair closer and leaned her head down toward me, and I began: "I met **this** morning, in a little square just east of us here — as I have several times met it before — a ready-made figure, a simile, that could be used advantageously to point a variety of morals or adorn almost any sort of tale. (I'm going to use it presently to illustrate and adorn these existing circumstances, so let me pursue my own way.)"

Genevieve pressed my hand in silent assent, and I went on. "It was — well, you might call it a peregrinating parable. It consists of two little boys, or girls (it was girls this morning) with their arms around each other, and sharing a pair of roller skates, each one wearing a skate and holding up the skateless foot. Now, would it not serve admirably to illustrate a sermon on Free Trade and Reciprocity? As a clincher to a matrimonial homily, how could it be beaten? Why, it would make the very jewel of a 'Husbands and Wives' tract! I shall offer this figure to preachers, free trade orators, and writers on the ideal marriage, to all and singular of whom I am sure it might be serviceable. In fact, when one thinks upon the matter, its application is almost unlimited. What are we all, dear Gen —"

"Genevieve," she prompted, smiling.

"Well, dear Genevieve, what are we all but children with one skate on? I do not believe it has ever been given to man to have two. I do not believe there is — or ever was — a soul of us, on this big bridge, stretching from the darkness of the Was into the darkness of the To Be, that wears more skates than one (and quite commonly a bad corn on the other foot, into the bargain), and we need some one on that off side, the strongest and best of us. We can skate along a little while, as these children can, we can frolic about and disport ourselves, that other foot with its bad, bad corn held safely up; but when we begin to wobble, as the most skilful of us is bound to wobble sooner or later, the one-skatedness of us is ruthlessly exposed, and there is an instant reaching out for help on that off side."



Genevieve did not say a word about my oddness, or my queer talk. She pressed my hand again, and just murmured, "Yes, I understand."

"You know," I went on, "I thought if anybody ever did have two skates on, it was I; and it was my religion to stand on my own feet, and depend upon nobody and nothing else than myself. I would have declared any day that at least *my* feet had a skate apiece. And now look at me. I —"

"Oh, come now, nonsense!" she interrupted, cheerily, "you have two good skates on two good feet, and all the skill and courage to use them. You forget that even people so equipped do fall down sometimes, or are knocked over. They simply get up and laugh, and skate on again."

When Genevieve had her hat and gloves on, ready to go, she inquired, "Now, where is the finished matter you wish me to take down along with this I have?"

"It is across in Miss Salem's room," I answered. "You can go through the sitting-room, here, and get it off her table — she is out."

"Yes, I know," returned Genevieve, "at the Authors' Club reception."

"And she's going to see that wonderful ball before she comes home, too," I added.

Genevieve fetched the big envelope, and stood turning it over absently in her hands. Finally she suggested, with her gaze fastened upon the manuscript, "You like her very much, don't you?"

"Like who? Miss Salem?" I asked, a little surprised.

She nodded.

"Why, yes. Yes, indeed," I responded, heartily.

"She is an attractive woman, very genuine and companionable. I should think any one she liked would be very apt to like her."

"Yes," assented Genevieve, "I suppose it is just so. And how delightful! To be so — so strong and admirable and attractive that any one whom you liked would be sure to like you."

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## CHAPTER XXIV.

### A Plaster Eros

"O Love! What shall be said of thee—  
The son of Grief, begot by Joy?  
Being sightless, wilt thou see?"

SOMETIME in the deep night I wakened abruptly but quietly, and lay looking at the shadow of the lace curtain as the strong white moonlight painted it upon the door. I was possessed utterly by a sense of ease and peace and thankfulness such as I had not known for many months, after the preposterous racking of that fierce and senseless headache. It was the door into the parlour between Miss Salem's room and mine which was shadow painted; and as I looked at it, it opened silently, and Miss Salem came in, exactly as Genevieve had come through the other door a few hours before.

She would have gone back at once, when she found the room dark, but I called to her, "I'm wide awake. Come in and turn on the lights. I am glad to have you." Then, as the lights flashed out, I added, "How splendid you look! What time is it?"

"Three o'clock. I have just left the 'world-famed ball,'" she replied. She was flushed a little beyond her wont, and looked very fine in her grand toilet.

"I thought I would come and see if you were awake — I imagined you might be writing. I have scarcely seen you since breakfast, and there is only one more day of our living together. Put on your dressing-gown and come over to my room, Cara, and tell me what wild adventure you met with to-day."

I smiled at a sudden recollection, and observing my mirth, she said, "There it is, tell it to me."

So, while Miss Salem removed her evening dress and adornments (for with all her generous, even lavish manner of living, she never kept a maid), and arrayed herself in dressing-gown and slippers, I produced the desired adventure.

"It was on the bridge," I began. "This afternoon — I find a good deal of my experience, and make many of my observations on the bridge — this afternoon I had been to Brooklyn. You know I am very fond of walking over the bridge, so I walked very slowly across it, and sat down on a bench on the New York tower, because I was nearly half an hour too early for an engagement. I was going to present a very nice letter of introduction to a very important person. The letter, you will understand, was written by a man who couldn't well help himself. He was under some obligations to a very warm partisan of mine back in Texas, and needed the support of a still warmer one in the matter of a little office."

Miss Salem began to laugh, and shook her head at me.

"Oh, that's right!" I cried, "I am just telling it to you straight. Well, then, it would show very poor judgment, indeed, — don't you think? — to go

early to such an engagement. So, meaning to occupy the spare half-hour, I sat down and opened a book — you know I always carry one with me.”

“Yes, I know you do — and never read it.”

“But people are much more interesting and attractive to me than books; and I always take them in preference, when I can get them. Failing people, a book is a great thing.”

“Certainly I ought to agree to that,” she smiled.

“Well,” I continued, “having opened my book, I looked about to see if I couldn’t find some living interest instead. Sure enough, not three feet away, there sat what Sam Weller would denominate ‘a old file.’ He was a very picture-book figure, a stage old man, long, thin, seedy, with fluffy white hair and glittering black eyes — eyes as black as the villain’s purpose. He fixed me with these burning eyes, and he says, says he, ‘Did you ever study Omnology?’”

“Now — now,” objected Miss Salem, reprovingly.

“He did,” I declared, “he did say Omnology. And he called it something else presently — as you’ll see, if you’ll let me get on with my story.”

“Well, well,” allowed Miss Salem, “go on.”

“He inquired, then,” I reiterated, “‘Did you ever study Omnology?’ and I blushed hotly, for I thought of that rosy letter in my pocket, which stated that I had been subjected, as it were, to a very superior education; and here was an old file requiring of me an ‘ology’ I’d never even heard of before. So I faltered, ‘Well — ah — only superficially. I —’

“‘Just so,’ interrupted the ancient man, ‘it is ever too abstract for the female mind. It is to

psychology what algebra is to arithmetic. Beautiful science — wonderful, ennobling study! Now, you are a woman' (I bowed humbly), 'but you have an intelligent eye' (I brightened), 'and I have a system by which I can explain to you the true principles of Omnetrics' (Omnetrics," I repeated, impressively, to Miss Salem. "I told you he called it something else later), 'a system by which I can explain to you the principles of Omnetrics in an hour's time.' (I collapsed.)

" 'Look at this bridge,' said my old man, 'the vast, powerful edifice. Note its massive towers, iron girders, cables, and pillars. Does it not seem great and wonderful to you — even as a mere bridge — a feat of engineering and mechanical skill? Yet all the structures of man, the monuments of his strength, the fabrics of his skill and cunning, are cryptograms, wherein lie hidden the soul's thought. All these thoughts and images, fit reading for an angel or a god, you may decipher if you once learn the magic key. Now to begin —'

"I glanced at my watch. I had just thirteen minutes to go on.

" 'But,' said he, with a note of reproach in his voice, as he observed the action, 'I am detaining you, I see. You wish to go. You are but a woman, a young woman at that, and these things —'

"This tone piqued me. 'You are much misled!' I cried. 'You do me wrong; you fail to reckon with my higher self; and you have simply no idea of my yearning after the unattainable. I should love to remain here on this ingeniously uncomfortable bench through blissful ages, listening to you on Omnology. But, alas! I must go and do things to



earn bread and butter. It is now two-seventeen o'clock. At two-thirty, sharp, I must be "there" to "see a person," or the particular jig which I am engaged in promoting is up. I do not know — I may never, never know — Omnetrics. But I know a little bit of arithmetic, enough to enable me to count small sums of money, and tell time. The difference between seventeen and thirty is still, as it was in my infancy, thirteen. Thirteen minutes from here to Printing-House Row! It is not, I trust you believe, that I lack the finer appreciation. "Time, time doth thrust me from thine arms; good-bye, sweetheart, good-bye!" And I fled away to New York."

During my recital, Miss Salem had laughed till the tears came. Now, as I made an end, she was silent; and her face, turned toward me, was tender and reminiscent; a mist of remembrance seemed to have arisen in those always beautiful dark eyes of hers.

"It was an adventure worthy of you," she said; "but your old man, your quaint old Yankee — of course you know he was a Yankee — has carried me back to my childhood; he has brought freshly back to me things that I had scarcely thought of since they happened — thirty years ago."

"Oh, yes," I agreed, "he was a Yankee of the Yankees. That's one reason why I thought he would amuse you."

"That is why he does much more than amuse me," she added. "Do you know, he reminds me of my great-uncle Ansel who lived with us — my mother and me — the last ten years of his life."

"This old file of mine," I suggested, a little hesitatingly, "had — er — wheels in his head."

"Oh, yes, I understand," she laughed. "Uncle Ansel was not entirely free from wheels. He was father's uncle. Mother understood him about as much as — well, as you understand Omnetrics. If he had lived somewhere else than in East Benton or its likes, he might perhaps have been a poet, or a great mathematician, or an inventor — he had genius. As it was, he was tinkering with a perpetual motion machine in the woodshed. He was eighty then. Long before I saw Uncle Ansel, his environment, hostile, scoffing, contemptuous, had overwhelmed and destroyed him. He was a gentle, drooping, silent, dark-eyed old man, with that patient, settled melancholy which seemed so much a part of him that it was hardly sad.

"Mother was always, in her way, kind to him; practical kindness, you know, of all sorts. But," and she laughed softly to herself, "how could he fail to perfect his perpetual motion machine, with such a model as she was always before him? A woman notable for her indomitable energy, her thrift, and her unending activity, even at East Benton, where such traits, you would think, could make themselves conspicuous only by their absence. And so for a confidante, Uncle Ansel was thrown upon me. And the story of your old man and his Omnology brought up to my mind the vision of myself, a very small girl in a very large apron, sitting on the woodshed step, with some light task considered suitable for my youthful hands, listening while Uncle Ansel lectured me upon his latest abstruse mechanical or metaphysical theory. And my mother, the silent, impa-



tient, capable New England woman, went endlessly about that labour which supported him and me and herself — and sometimes, when things went badly, father, too, who was considered visionary and impractical, and who was down here in New York much of this time.

“I used to be half-crazy with sheer joy during father’s visits home. He was always concerned with books and bookmaking. You know he was working here at his trade — that of a printer — but still trusting to establish the publishing business of which he finally did make such a great success. To me, a child whose only real life was in the few books he could bring me, he was a prince, my ideal of grace, and of courtesy and refinement — and so dear, so very dear.”

Miss Salem sat gazing with reflective eyes at the rings she was taking off and putting back upon her slender fingers. All that she had said sounded very strange to me; for knowing, as I now realised, very little of her, I had never imagined her without her appropriate setting of power and affluence. Now, I smiled a little at the remembrance of Mr. DeWitt’s recent embarrassment before her victoria, her liveried servants, her Paris costume; for it was certainly before these, not before Priscilla Salem, that he felt embarrassment.

“You are very like your father, aren’t you, Miss Salem?” I suggested.

“Why, yes. Yes, in many ways,” she returned. “I look like him, and I certainly have his gift of knowing unerringly what will make a lastingly popular and profitable book. That was the thing he put into the firm which made its great success. His

partner was exclusively a financial man. But I must have inherited some of my mother's faculty; for I have always, in all circumstances, been my own financier."

Miss Salem laughed reminiscently. "I will tell you a funny thing I did when I was a child, that showed the curious working of the two natures in me. With my mother's unflagging energy and fidelity of purpose, I picked blueberries, all through the season, the year I was seven — for that was the only way an East Benton child could have earned a little money — to get enough to buy a gift for my father, when he should come home at Thanksgiving.

"My mother had too clear an appreciation of human rights to take the money from me, or even coerce my choice, as most New England women of her time and circumstances would have done. But she did suggest one or two articles of apparel which she knew would be welcome and needed.

"When at last I found myself in the store, with more money than I had ever had in all my life together, I was dazzled by the bewildering possibilities in a dollar and a quarter. But all my doubts were soon ended. There was a small statuette representing Love; a poor little thing, of course, in every sense; but the whiteness of it, and beyond all the idea it carried, so charmed me, so overwhelmed me with delight, that I felt sure father, once in possession of it, would be perfectly happy. It was, I remember, a dollar and three shillings; and the store-keeper let me have it for my dollar and a quarter 'seeing's 'twas me, and a present to my pa.'

"Mother's helpless anger before it, when I car-

ried it home, in a perfect fever of delight and anticipation; her bitter regret that she had allowed me such latitude, are things I understood better later.

"Poor, thrifty, sorely tried soul! She got small comfort in the matter out of either of us; for I would not be penitent, and father persisted in being delighted because I had bought for him the thing that I loved and cared for, with full confidence that he would understand and love it, too. This comforted me entirely; besides, Uncle Ansel admired my purchase warmly, if clandestinely; so that, though we were not individually influential, we had mother in a numerical minority."

We had turned off the lights some time ago, to see if it was getting to be day. It seemed strange to me to think of Priscilla Salem, even as a child, being swayed or driven by unruly emotions, wayward desires. I had always held her a sort of model of all the discreet and serviceable virtues, and a nature rarely poised and reposeful. Now, it occurred to me that this poise was what might be expected in a woman whose ambition appeared to be attained, her material desires gratified.

I realised now, as I looked at her shadowy face with its large luminous eyes, that though she was, as she had so frankly told me, forty years old, there were in these features still all those youthful possibilities of spendthrift emotion. When she should meet in the shops of life her next little bogus statuette, I believed she would once more be capable of paying for it all she possessed.

"You must be almost entirely like your father," was my conclusion.

"Oh, yes," she assented, "I am a Salem. And I suppose I may be glad of it. Such beauty as there is in the family comes in on that side. Uncle Ansel was the type, and he was a beautiful old man. I love his looks, because I fancy he was such a man as father would have looked had he lived to be old. And I could always imagine that, when he was young, he had looked as father did."

She rose and brought to me a daguerreotype, a slender-faced young man, with a great dome of forehead, serious, lambently emotional eyes, a beautiful but deficient lower face, and an expression of shy abstraction.

"Why, it's the 'Young Prophet,' — it's my 'Young Isaiah!'" I cried, using a name I had given to an oil portrait, done with much vigour and grace, signed by a modern name, which hung over the chimneypiece in the main editorial rooms down town.

"It is my father," said Miss Salem. And I remembered that Mr. DeWitt had said one day when I used the same words in regard to the big portrait, "It is the founder of the house."

Now we pushed the lace curtain aside, and I looked — seeking resemblances — from the face in the daguerreotype to Miss Salem's face bent above it, the cold gray daylight bringing out sharply every feature and line. As I thus searched for resemblances and for differences, it occurred to me that the portrait I so admired must have been made when her father's age was nearly what Miss Salem's now was, and that my tribute had been to the immortal youth which looked out of his eyes, the youth of soul, rather than to any special evidence of physical

youngness. Priscilla must have got something, just here, from her mother, for, handsome and expressive as her face was, sweet and luminous as were her eyes, no such spirit of youth looked forth from them. Rather, she was fully old for her years, and she wore the look of one who would, as her material, conventional mother had done, expect and accept age.

"Then," I thought, "if she does find her little statuette, and set her heart upon and buy it, and it is bogus, that will indeed be tragic."

Miss Salem glanced up at me suddenly and interrupted my reflections by saying in a curious, half-conscious, half-jesting, wholly pathetic tone, "Cara, should you suppose — did you ever — what do you say to running away together from all our problems and — and — tempt — to running away for a time? Were you ever in Old Mexico?"

"Yes, I should say yes to both questions. I have been in Old Mexico twice, and found it wonderfully fascinating; and I think it would be serving our fates a very clever and saucy trick to run away and go there together. Our relative positions would there be changed. I could show you much that the tourist does not see."

There had never been any confidences between Miss Salem and me. Only, she had been kinder and drawn closer to me in these last weeks. And on her part, she had not sought to conceal from me that something — an anxiety, a regret or apprehension — was weighing upon her heart.

Now we talked a little while of Mexico, where she who had travelled all over Europe, and even to

Japan, had never been. We constructed a hypothetical itinerary, and agreed quite heartily that such a journey would be most enjoyable.

And I kept saying to myself: "We will never go to Mexico. No, no; it is here, the thing that disquiets and yet attracts her. And she fears it, dreads it, maybe, hesitates at it — and is drawn and held by it. She only half wants to run away."

We separated a few minutes later, going each to her bed; and she kissed my cheek as I rose to go — a mark of affection I had never seen her offer to any one.

I was to leave the next day — the day which was already begun, indeed. I meant to go before she should be awake, and did so, later.

Now, after my head was upon the pillow, the word Mexico, Mexico, began dancing through my thoughts. It took to itself other little words ending in its round sonorous vowel; it caught hands with others and yet others, adding them to its tripping, balancing, swaying train.

And the country of my mind, the land through which this resonant verbal procession wound dancing, was Old Mexico. So, presently I rose, and sitting wrapped in my dressing-gown, in that pale, chill, saddening gray of dawn, beside the window, wrote them down on a slip of paper which, stealing softly into her room, I pinned to Miss Salem's pillow edge; then came silently back, slept two or three hours, rose, packed my belongings, and was back at the Corcorans' for lunch.

This is what my dancers said, and what I pinned to Miss Salem's pillow:

And when we're off at last to Mexico — Mexico —  
To the land of Montezuma, and the land of Cortez, O,  
Where dusky old cathedrals, and wool and cacti grow,  
Where the mountains are so high, and the state of morals low,  
I'll be your most devoted, thoughtful, entertaining beau.  
You will be head, of course, and I'll be end-man of the show;  
And we'll hoist our little sails to all the frolic winds that blow,  
Caring not for time or tide, recking not of fast or slow,  
For we'll leave them all behind, the griefs that haunt and vex  
us so,

Drifting out to sea, just which way the currents go,  
Or rocking in some eddy, to the ebb and to the flow,  
Dreaming all that checked and thwarted us was years and  
years ago,  
And that sorrow's grave is deep, where heartsease and pop-  
pies grow.

But a string, a string is to us, let us wander high or low!  
A little string that tightens, yet, the further that we go.  
I'll tell you! Let us break it, with one determined blow!  
(Just a snap, and all is over; it won't hurt long, I know)  
Let's change garments with some shepherdess, and *live* in  
Mexico.

There, the rains they will not wet us, rude winds they never  
blow;

The sun, it only shines to lend to cheeks a warmer glow;  
Pitying skies will smile above, the kindly slopes below —  
There's no such thing as happiness, on earth, of course, you  
know,

But rest, I think that we might find, and peace — in Mexico.  
So, if it's peace you're seeking, say yes! Is it a go?

## CHAPTER XXV.

### Flawed Vessels

"Shall the thing formed say to him who formed it, Why hast thou made me thus?"

"Hath not the potter power over the clay, of the same lump to make one vessel unto honour and another unto dishonour?"

BUSHROD, Genevieve, and I had been taking our last walk together for the present. Mrs. Randolph, it seemed, was worse. They had written Bushrod to come to her, and he was to go that night.

Mr. DeWitt had needed some one in Chicago for a bit of special work, and upon my promising that my own column should not suffer thereby, had agreed that I might go. So that I was leaving the next day. Genevieve had parted from us at the Park gateway, and Bushrod and I were separating at my door.

No man but Bushrod Floyd would have been willing under the circumstances, knowing that I had not heard from Frank, that my heart was sore and aching because I had not heard — not a line, a word, a message, even an indirect one — to suggest carefully veiled, second-hand information. But Bushrod's only thought was to offer whatever would most please or help me, and so he said, at the last



moment, "This will be my address in Richmond, Cara," handing me a little card, and adding, "Are you going to stop at the Shrewsbury, as DeWitt suggested?"

"Yes," I replied, "he has arranged for me to be there."

"Then I shall have your address from the first," observed Bushrod. "You know I must write to you;" then lightly, "it's got to be a kind of blessed habit," and we said good-bye, bidding each other be of good cheer, and separated.

No letter reached me from Bushrod during my brief stay in Chicago. When I came home, greatly disquieted, Mr. Corcoran told me they had been notified at the office that he had not arrived in Richmond; and, as Mrs. Randolph still grew worse, being now considered in a dangerous condition, they had telegraphed the office, his boarding-place, and the Randolph kin in Washington, hoping to find him.

I had selfishly counted on long, loving letters which should give me, under guise of general news, all details of Frank's life, appearance, and, as nearly as another man could guess it, his present state of feeling. To have no news from Virginia was a disappointment, of itself; but the way in which it had failed me was chilling, ominous.

Mr. DeWitt was short for humourous copy in the service, one of his funny men being down with the grip, and he appealed to me. "You could do me such a column very cleverly, Miss West," he blanded. "If you would take some of the street scenes, which you handle so well, and make them a trifle more farcical, it would be just what I need,

Why not try one of the police courts? I used to get much of my humourous copy at the Tombs."

"Oh, Mr. DeWitt," I protested, "there isn't an ounce of fun in me — haven't you some nice obituary work for me? — I am in the mood for it, exactly."

My editor smiled broadly, then gave me a keen, kindly glance, which suggested that he examined my drooping head for a garland of willow. I read, or thought I read, in his eye the dictum that whether I could write funny or not, I myself was monstrous amusing.

I accepted the Tombs commission with undue haste, and went away to hunt up Jim, who, Miss Bucks being in Canada visiting friends, was the one strong, cheerful face left in my daily life.

The next day but one, I brought in my copy. It was not the humourous matter for which my editor had asked. As I laid the package upon his desk I said, "There. I wish I had never attempted the mission; but there are the results, as near funny as I could make them."

He gave me a quick, inquiring glance. "Wasn't my suggestion a good one?" he asked. "Did you not find stimulating material in it?"

"Oh, yes, I found myself stimulated to question all the plans of God," I answered. "It has hammered in my brain all day, 'Why? — Why? What is the purpose in all the misery of this miserable world?'"

"Didn't you get anything at the Tombs?" asked Mr. DeWitt. "I have always found so much in it — both tragic and humourous."

"Yes," I repeated, bitterly, "I found it there —

I got it there — the whole, everlasting, horrible, maddening problem. Oh, I got it, fast enough — I got it bad. Now I want some one to tell me what to do with it!”

I looked — I had learned to look — for a smart rejoinder from Mr. DeWitt; a sarcastic suggestion, perhaps, that I remit my herculean and exhausting labours upon mending the world’s condition, and attend strictly to the production of humourous copy; but the things which had chanced to me, on that miserable hunt for material wherewith to build a funny column, still clutched at my throat and demanded utterance.

What he did was to lean forward, put his chin on his hand, and regard me quietly and intently.

“Yes,” he observed, after a long pause, “it was a mistake. I was wrong to send you there. I suppose the very outside appearance of the place struck chill to your soul?”

“Why, no,” I returned, “not forecasting what I should meet within, I was rather fascinated by the mere outside of it. The long, low, gloomy pile looks like a scrap out of the sombre Eastern past, dropped by some queer accident into the heart of to-day. Do you know who designed it?”

“I have known the story of the thing, but I can’t recall it just this minute,” answered Mr. DeWitt.

“I wonder if its architecture came and camped down upon the outskirts of his consciousness among the Oriental phantasmagoria of a hashish dream,” I parleyed. I was already repentant that I had said so much to my editor, anxious only to have him allow that the stuff I had brought in would do, and let me go.

"Why, yes, I think it did, hashish, or some of its congeners," he returned. "But tell me what hurt you, personally, in all that ruck of wretchedness? I am curious to know."

I had been standing beside Mr. DeWitt's desk. At a sudden recollection which his words brought up to me, I turned and sat down, shading my eyes with my hand. Then, aware that he was looking at me very curiously, and that my attitude must be inexplicable to him, I said, with an attempt at cheerfulness, "It's a really wonderful looking building. It should have groups of ebony soldiers, bare-legged, wearing curiously folded head-dresses and bearing great spears, to stand motionless at its entrances, instead of the blue-coated, brass-buttoned policeman. A person only fairly supplied with imagination needs but to half shut his eyes, as I did, and look expectantly at its portals, to see Cleopatra surrounded by her fan-bearers, attended by Charmian, and Iras, and all her shimmering train, issue from the dark arch and sweep down the broad flight of steps, to vanish into the glare of Centre Street."

"That's all right," remarked my editor, sitting up. "What's the matter with that? Why didn't you get up something along that line? Or maybe you did. Is this," partially unfolding my copy, "in that vein?"

"No," I answered, in a broken voice, "that stuff is supposed to be funny; but if people shed the tears over reading it that I did over writing it, you will carry out that old-time threat of yours and discharge me without a character."

"Why didn't you stick to the poetic vein? that was good in its way," said Mr. De Witt.

"Why, indeed?" I cried, "because we *went inside!*"

"'We' — who?" he inquired.

"Jim and I," I answered; "Jim Baxter. I got him to put off that beloved trip up the Hudson till next week, and go with me instead."

"That was a mistake," said Mr. De Witt. "The big Texas man is an infant in matters of that sort. If anything painful was to be met, he would be safe to go all to pieces over it."

"Well, we went in ready to be amused; for I recalled that you had told me you once got such a funny story there."

"Oh, I!" remarked Mr. DeWitt, "with my blunted sensibilities, my cynical city man's point of view. No, I see it was not a bright idea for me to send you there — to find fun. Then you must needs annex a worse booby, a more besotted philanthropist than yourself! You two were indeed a pair of dewy-eyed babes for a stunt like the Tombs police court! I should as soon have thought of asking Miss Bucks to write up a prize-fight," and he chuckled.

"Well, we looked about inside, and agreed that the room where court is held had a certain grotesque resemblance to the interior of a country church, with its rows of benches on each side a central aisle, its rail across in front of the pulpit-like judge's seat, and its amen corner full of fine-looking, well-groomed policemen."

"But that isn't bad, either," put in my editor, meditatively. "It seems to me, after all, that you did find much which you could make use of, though it wasn't humorous."

"Oh, but when we came to see the *material* from which the 'fun' was to have been made!" I cried. "No country mourner's bench or anxious seat ever supported such piteous penitents; no village parson ever exhorted, comforted, or reproved such wrecked and ruined temples of humanity."

"I suppose the two of you got your first sight of 'the criminal classes' about which you had read, and found you had no real conception of what they really are."

"Yes, just that," I responded with some relief. "No conception — no notion; I don't believe that anybody has who lives in the country, in a village, or in the West, where there is room and a chance for all, or, indeed, anywhere outside of the large cities. What horrified us was that these are not people who have committed a crime or misdemeanour; they are those — if I might use the expression — who are to commit crimes. Look at them, and say if they do not carry their doom with them. It is born with them at their birth, of vicious and depraved parents; the air of vice is in their baby nostrils, the aptitude for crime, the impulse of long past evil, is in their veins. Crime is expected of them — everything impels them to it — they are foredoomed — consigned — to it."

"You take it too hard!" deprecated my editor. "Of course it is a grim theatre; but I tell you they are all actors, more or less. Every one of the pitiful crew which crowd its greenroom and elbow each other upon its stage, watches the judge's face to see what *rôle* will have most effect upon him, and each does his level best to play the part."

"It is a squalid tragedy," I sighed.

"No, it is that newer thing in stage work, the vaudeville —"

"Frightfully dismal vaudeville," I insisted, gloomily.

"Oh, yes, there are ugly features," my editor assented, "but everything is included — from tragedy down to the broadest farce — in one morning's performance. And consider that, if the scenery is a bit scant and monotonous, at least there are no waits to speak of. The action is prompt, and in the strain of living interest one forgets to note trifles. Things go through with a rush; the heavy villain elbows the *ingénue*, the low comedian treads on the skirts of the emotional *tragédienne*."

"Yes, if you come to that," I said, "there is as small lack of feeling and spirit as of promptness and action. A theatre, is it? A vaudeville? Well, never have I seen 'little parts' infused with such sentiment and energy. There was one such part there to-day which contained only two spoken words; but I tell you their tone, and the look and gesture that went with them, form a recollection to which I have ever since sought vainly to give the slip. 'Six months,' that is all there was to it. A white-faced, haggard man had the part, and he raised his hand vaguely toward his head with a movement of utter despair, and turned blindly from the bar toward the bench where the sentenced ones wait for the black Maria. He had not looked up nor spoken before. When the charge of assault was made, a young sprig of a police-court lawyer beside him had repeated, in answer to the judge's question, 'Guilty,' after bending toward the man's moving lips; and had added an explanation and a plea for a sick

young wife and little children, who would be left among strangers. Oh, I tell you — ”

“ There you go, taking it all in deadly earnest,” interrupted Mr. DeWitt. “ Now, I saw a little play there at the Tombs one morning that discounted anything I ever met in the regular way of acting. If you will ‘ cease your complaint and suppress your groan ’ for the moment, I will give it to you — maybe you can use it.

“ I just strolled in there, on a sort of vagrant, unauthorised impulse one morning, and after they had ground through three or four commonplace cases — ”

“ Commonplace ! ” I breathed. “ Save the mark ! ”

“ Yes, deadly commonplace,” reiterated Mr. DeWitt. “ — they brought in another batch. Among these was a remarkably handsome young man of very elegant dress, manner, and bearing. He was really a picture; a Poe-like figure. But he was considerably damaged and showed plainly the effect of a night’s debauch. The judge let fly at him promptly, and gave him to understand he would very much like to have him show cause why he should not get six months on the Island for resisting an officer.

“ The youth threw out his chest, clasped his hands, and turned an electric battery of eloquent dark eyes on the judge, and the room was still to hear him as he answered, ‘ Judge, I was drugged. I don’t drink, your Honour, and I wasn’t drunk last night; I was drugged.’

“ I think every one of us, the judge, and the Irish policeman who brought the fellow in, began to weaken and misdoubt probabilities. The officer



scratched his head dubiously, and finally said, 'Well, your Honour, I'll tell you what he had on him when we run 'im in. 'Twas a pair o' brass knucks, an' a slung shot, an' siventeen pawn tickets we found in his pockets. An' if there hadn't been two of us on the job there'd have been murder done getting him in the wagon.'

"While the officer was saying this, the young fellow's face beat anything I ever saw. There went across it, in the most wonderful way, astonishment, horror, and a perfect anguish of shame. At the end he burst out, 'My wedding night — my wedling night! I was to have married the sweetest girl in the world last night, judge. I remember going into a place to have something with a man — I never drink, but he asked me to come and drink to the happy occasion. And merciful heaven! I don't remember any more, judge. That drink was drugged as sure as there's a power above us!' Here he looked wildly round the court-room, and his fine eyes suddenly announced the horror of a new thought. 'I never went near her, I never sent her any word — what must she think of me? Oh, what can I ever say to her?' He groaned, and I tell you I felt mighty uncomfortable. The judge himself had looked first puzzled, then interested, and finally as sympathetic as I felt.

"The appearance of the young fellow was now as near abject as so handsome and spirited a figure could well be, and I declare it somehow went to my heart to see it. Yes, it actually did.

"The judge was plainly hesitating. The prisoner suddenly leaned forward and said in a low, feverish, hurried voice, 'Judge, I must go to her

at once — just as I am — and explain. I haven't a cent on me to pay my fine; but you'll be merciful and let me go, won't you? And you won't ask my name — in this place — nor hers.'

"I suppose his Honour was once young himself. He looked at the working, eloquent young face and pleading young eyes; he cleared his throat and began:

" 'Well, young man — drugs, or no drugs — even if you were drunk, I think you've had a pretty good lesson, and I'm inclined —'

"But we never knew exactly what his inclination might have been, for at that interesting juncture a disturbance broke out near one of the doors, and I saw a stout, red-faced Englishwoman pushing her way toward the bar, muttering as she came. She brought up in front of the prisoner with a startling snort.

" 'Yah! There y' are; h'all yer good clothes in a muck, an' a fine t' pay fer yeh!'

"His eye lit on her, and the young man collapsed.

"His Honour braced up as if he had never weakened, and asked the woman, 'What is the prisoner to you, madam?'

" 'H'only my 'usband,' she snorted. And we all laughed gladly.

" 'Why didn't you hold your gab?' said the fellow, coming out of his collapse with a perfectly amazing air of jaunty indifference. 'His Honour was going to let me off to go to me girl,' and he winked a wink that caused several policemen to roar with laughter; and even the judge to smile reluctantly.

"But with his wife, it was the red flag to the

bull. 'W'y didn't h'I?' she demanded. 'Because h'I was too dratted mad! *You* a-marryin' a lovely gal — Yah! Took a h'old fool like me t' 'ave yeh.'

"The woman had the fine to pay, so the judge made it light. An Associated Press man whom I know told me afterward that the fellow is — or was — an actor. He's a clever one, I'll certify. It seems he was a talented, dissolute chap who had perpetrated one thrifty act in the course of an exceptionally reckless and disgraceful career, in the marrying of his landlady. You see he assured himself, in this way, a permanent home and plenty of purple and fine linen, whether he employed his abilities on the regular stage, or only in pleasing little domestic comediettas. 'Great is art, used to great ends,' you know. I tell you, Miss West, they are all actors, more or less conscious. But this young man brought to the work professional training, and he gave us a good show for our trouble. Don't you think so?"

"Yes. Oh, yes," I agreed, glad to get away from the remembrance of what I had seen there, and the problem it left beating away in my mind. "It is so, too, that in all strenuous aspects of human life the laugh lies close to the tragedy. Even I saw a funny thing in that sorrowful place."

"Why didn't you say so, then, instead of —"

"I am saying so now," I broke in. "She was a pippin-faced little old Irishwoman; and when the judge asked her what she had to say to the officer's charge of drunk and disorderly she put her head on one side, stuck her elbows out and assumed the very attitude of a disputatious sparrow. Her round,

wrinkled, rosy face fell into the most explanatory and ingratiating expression.

“ ‘Judge,’ she said, in a confidential tone, ‘I was drunk, I was just drunk — that’s the truth. I keep a little stand down on Canal Street. All the byes come to get an apple of me. Me an’ the byes — all the bootblacks an’ newsbyes, an’ some of the coppers — is good friends. Well, I have been a-havin’ the grip; havin’ it bad. I was sick abed for more’n a month; an’ when I got out the byes was all that glad to see me they wouldn’t listen to nothin’ but I must have a drink with ivery one of ’em. I reckon I did — yes, I reckon I had a drink with ivery one of ’em — for I don’t remember much more till Johnnie, here’ (jerking her head toward the six-foot officer beside her) ‘woke me up in the jug awhile ago, and brought me here.

“ ‘Say, judge,’ she wheedled, cocking one eye with irresistible drollery on his Honour’s relaxing face, ‘I reckon you better let me off. I didn’t go to do it, fer a fact; but the byes was that glad to see me — an’, to tell the truth, I can’t drink as I used to drink.’ We all laughed — even Jim.”

“And the judge?”

“Oh, he let her off. She came out of the dock smiling like a cherub, hanging on to ‘Johnnie’s’ arm, and travelling at a sort of two-step,” I answered.

“But you say I take it too hard. May I tell you a thing that made Jim and me wish we had gone up the Hudson — or Salt River — or any place but there to that — well, don’t suppose I’m swearing if I say that accursed police court? Please let me

tell you. I'll be quick. I want to see if you think it funny or commonplace."

"Certainly. By all means. You can have as much as fifteen minutes of my valuable time," he agreed.

"I will only take about three," I returned, assuringly. "This was a part which had no lines at all, a mere walking part; but it made its impression on poor Jim and me as a branding-iron does. I had seen something like it before. When I was quite a little girl, I caught a rat in a trap — a marauding, ravening rat, which had burglarised my small stores of possessions and murdered my little nestling, orphan rabbit. And when I went and looked at the thing, it silently fled round and round the trap, at such an awful bay of pure, base, brutish fear, it looked at me with such eyes of sheer, deadly terror, that my childish soul was shamed. When I wept over the fur and bones of my baby rabbit and baited my trap, I had not taken any thought as to the final disposition of the criminal. I probably would have said it must be killed some quick and merciful way. But it was as though the creature took its revenge upon me, accusing me by inference, with that terror, of meditated cruelties unspeakable. Its frenzy of grovelling desperation painted those cruelties with lightning swiftness and distinctness upon my shrinking mind."

"My luxuriant and bounteous Southwest," urged Mr. DeWitt, laughing, and using one of my many sobriquets which Mr. Corcoran had made popular in the office, "I should infallibly burke about thirty per cent. of those adjectives if you gave me this stuff in copy, instead of —"

"I wish you could burke the recollection which they endeavour to clothe with some little semblance of reality," I responded, meekly. "I was going to say that the look on this poor little, gray, pinched face was the same look of mute animal terror."

"Yes — what face?" suggested my editor, kindly.

"Well," I explained, "she was a pitiful creature seventeen or eighteen years old, who had thrown her baby into the East River. She didn't really belong anywhere in our morning's program — our vaudeville. Her trial — from the day before — was to be continued in some special court; she was brought in only to arrange some legal point before our judge. They read her statement. It was a very simple statement, which set forth that she was near starving when she did it. She could do nothing for the child — nor for herself, with it. She threw it in the river. She nodded, without a sound, when asked if this was correct. And after some little conferring and discussing they went away, the two well-dressed lawyers, several large, stout officers, and this small and abject creature. In her little face, in the leaping glances of her eyes, and the instinctive crouching of her body, there was that awful agony of dumb terror that arraigned all mankind.

"Jim simply groaned over her, and proposed that we go, and we — well, we came away."

Mr. DeWitt opened his lips to speak; and I, expecting a sarcasm, made an impatient movement.

"No, no!" he interposed, "I was not about to chaff you. I thought I would drop into poetry as a friend — do you understand? as a friend!"

I was silent, looking contrite and submissive and

grateful, and Mr. DeWitt went on. "Your own dear Omar describes it.

"'Impotent pieces of the game he plays  
Upon this checker-board of nights and days,  
Hither and thither moves, and checks and slays,  
And one by one back in the closet lays.'

"That is what he said about it eight hundred years ago. It was unorthodox then; it is just as unorthodox now. But I never pretended to be orthodox. If the old Tent-maker were running a column in — say — the *Evening Sun*, in what essential do you suppose his verse would differ? We are here — two or three millions of us — in these cities. We epitomise the world at large. Every fellow chases his phantom, hugs his delusion. We are stimulated and sustained by hope, maddened by despair, or dull and apathetic with weariness. We are content or wretched; turning each one, to pleasure, or profit, or wisdom, to good or evil, to happiness or misery — but we turn of a necessity, and we cannot know why. There appears to be a seed of fate in each of us, that must grow to its predestined form and stature, blossom in its appointed time, and bring forth fruit according to its kind."

Now, I had just seen, for the first time, the low heads and brutal or vicious or weak faces of those who habitually come before the bar of a police court; the petty thief, the drunkard, the abject travesties of womanhood, poor tossing waifs and wreckage of humanity. Enough, one would say, to beget in me a mood of cosmic discouragement. I had, beside, sustained there in that place a shock

of which I did not tell Mr. DeWitt, a shock which still reverberated through all my being. Yet his submissive fatalism roused some scattering of my more usual healthful hope and courage.

The thing of which he knew not was too terrible — it touched me too close. In the face of it, I dared not despair. I realised that the attitude I had held was weak, unworthy. I must speak the word of hope for all pitiful creatures who were unable to speak it for themselves. So I answered him earnestly.

“What you say is, in a measure — in a sense — true. And yet these things, I know, must needs subserve some useful purpose. These beings are going their progress; they are swinging through the dark part of the circle. When I look at such, can I believe that the Power which beheld the growth and formation of that low skull, with its great room for things fierce and base, and its cramped little chambers for the housing of any higher intellect, beheld — ay, and ordered — the moulding of those weak, irresolute features, outward sign and blazonment of the feeble will within, will crush and destroy the creature for not being other than a fixed law made it?”

“Crush them?” interjected Mr. DeWitt. “They are crushed now. Life has done that to them.”

“No,” I declared, “I know it seems so. But I do not believe it. They are progressing, just as everybody — everything — is; on a way that is wholly dark to them, largely dark to us, to even the highest, the most spiritualised intelligence; but they are progressing. And there is cause, reason for it all; and hope — hope — hope — don’t tell



me — I know it, I feel it — there is hope while a human heart beats or a breath flutters!”

“Yes,” returned Mr. DeWitt, “people of our class, who have had a chance in the world, have no right to judge them. When one of us who has had the light falls, ‘He falls like Lucifer, never to rise again.’”

The words came as a spur to me. “You must be always playing Job!” I cried. “No. No. No, I say. *Nobody* falls never to rise again. I am so sure of it that I can forget all I saw there at that place yesterday. I can be cheerful. I can be funny, now. Give me back that stuff I handed you — it is not really humorous. I can go write the funny Coney Island story — I feel like it now. I’m glad I talked to you.”

“In your fine enthusiasm,” began Mr. DeWitt, “you overlook little fond considerations of time. It is at nine o’clock to-morrow morning, that I have a use for something to fill that space.”

“I will have it here on time,” I assured him. “And you will find it funny, too. It will *be funny*, d’ye mind! ‘Seed of fate!’ ‘Turn of a necessity — and we can’t know why!’ I will tell you: This ‘impotent piece’ is the one called the queen, who believes that none can say ‘check!’ to her, unless her own self pronounce — or accept — the injunction. And she can believe that of all the others, too.”

“It appears to me that I shall receive some surprising copy to-morrow morning,” Mr. DeWitt observed, in a general way.

“You will,” I told him. “The story — the Coney Island story — is the thing! I will remove

all brakes. For once I'll write as funny as I can, and let you and the readers take the consequences."

"I declare," said Mr. DeWitt, with deep and kindly seriousness, "I declare, my young and sunny West, I'd rather have your buoyant ardour than my brains."

"Oh, good gracious, yes!" I cried, hastily. "So would I! But just consider, I've got it, and *my* brains!"

## CHAPTER XXVI.

### “The Pity of It!”

“O changed in little space!

O God, O God of grace!

Cover his face.”

AND now, the thing which I had not told Mr. DeWitt, which still lay a secret between me and Jim, and clipped the wings of my humour and hung heavy on my pencil when I would gladly have written the funny Coney Island story for my editor, was this:

After we had, as I had described to Mr. DeWitt, seen all these pitiful creatures come and go, I was sitting with my head bent over my note-book, writing, when a smothered ejaculation from Jim made me look up. There in the prisoners' dock, between two policemen, was the form of one I knew. There was Bushrod, who had left the office a week ago to hasten to the bedside of the woman who had been all the mother he had ever known.

I looked with horrified, incredulous eyes. It was the same tall, broadly built figure, and the same face — but different. He was in evening dress — evening dress! Where had he lived, through what strange, dark, unknown scenes and experiences had

he been, this week, to come at last to the eyes of his friends in this place, and in evening dress?

Bushrod was always dainty and immaculate, finical as a fine lady about his wear. Now, the exquisite linen which his low-cut vest exposed was soiled and rumpled. There were ragged holes where studs and sleeve links had been torn from it. His patent leather shoes were bursted, muddy, their laces hanging loose upon the floor. The curls of his fair hair, even, were matted down and spattered with mud. He had evidently fallen in the streets, more than once.

But that which chained my agonised attention was his face, discoloured, swollen, and the blue eyes — those soft, fond eyes — without any light of reason in them.

As we looked up, the judge was speaking to him. "Well, my man!" he began, brusquely. "The officer says he brought you in fighting drunk last night. What have you to say for yourself?"

Bushrod laid a shaking, white hand upon the rail. His hands were slender, nervous, capable-looking members, the hand of the artist; speaking, too, of generations of good blood. Now he stood supporting himself against the rail, curiously humped and sunken, and drew forward the torn hole in his cuff where the sleeve link had been. He stared at it vacantly, and muttered something which I did not catch. Jim told me afterward that he was saying he had been robbed.

"The officer states that you pulled those things out yourself," responded the Judge, "and spent them for drink."

Bushrod gazed at the torn linen, and at his finger

where, as I well remembered, there had been a ring, and nodded. "Oh, yes, sir," he agreed, "certainly, sir." And then, trying vaguely to pull himself together, he went on with a kind of groan, looking piteously about him, "I am a very sick man, sir. Will nobody give me a drink of water?"

At this, the person next me, on the other side from Jim, turned suddenly round and looked at me, at which I discovered that I was moaning, "Oh, oh, oh," softly, as one half unconscious with pain moans. Nothing — no loss or grief or failure of my own — had ever torn my heart just as this thing did.

For the first time in my life, I felt that I should faint. "Jim!" I gasped, clutching his arm. "You must go and help — quick. Can't I get away without passing — without going close to him? I'm afraid I'm going to faint, and I cannot go past where he is."

"He wouldn't know you, child," said Jim. "He's crazy — wild. Lord! I've seen lots of them like that after a week's spree, and that is what Bush has been doing. Why don't they get him a chair?" he added, angrily. "I've got to go over there and help him."

We rose at the same moment. The policeman was speaking now.

"Well, your Honour, I'll tell ye what he done. He began in the respectable places, an' he drank himself so woild that he was turned out of all o' them. Then he comes down here on the lower Bowery an' thried to clane out ivery dive on the strate. He was murtherous, an' whoopin' like a wild Injun. In some o' the places, they done 'im up and

t'rowed 'im out; an' in some o' the places he done some o' them up. He's a fighter all right."

While the officer spoke, I could not keep my eyes from Bushrod's face. He was hearing nothing of it, I felt sure. There was a cut on his forehead, and the soft curls were matted into it, where it had bled uncared for. Beside the havoc made of his clothes, there were a dozen hurts or bruises upon his face and hands. His eyes were fixed and unseeing, and as he sank into the chair which had now been brought to him he began a troubled muttering, and the policeman put a hand upon him to hush him.

He lay back in the chair; his head was dropped over the back of it at a curious, unlikelike angle, so that his eyes gazed, blank and sightless, upon the ceiling. His face was ghastly white, with unnatural mottlings of dark red.

The countenance which I had last seen rounded and dimpled like that of infancy, showed strange, abrupt depressions. The mouth was open, the features twisted to one side like the lines of a faulty peach; and as I looked he began to sing, and the policeman shook him rudely by the shoulder to silence him.

"‘And the stars shall fall, and the angels be weeping.  
Ere I cease to love her, my queen — my queen!’"

The words came in a small, whispering, flatted echo of that big, rich, tender, mellifluous instrument, Bushrod Floyd's voice, which, again, was a modification of Frank's matchless, heart-satisfying tones.

Jim and I had been making our way toward the rail as well as we could. Before we reached it, the judge exclaimed testily:

" Silence that man — or take him out! "

The ghastliness of the thing gave me strength. " I'll go, Jim," I said. " I can get out quite well alone. I'll sit outside in the lobby, and you must — "

" Oh, I'll make it all right," declared Jim, hurrying me toward the door. " It's not the first time he's been drunk, and run in, poor fellow! "

" Nay, but 'twill be the lasht toime," whispered the little apple-woman, who stood not far from the dock rail, gazing at him. " If iver I saw death in a face, 'tis in yon."

Jim came to me, after nearly half an hour. He had gotten Bushrod sent to a hospital, not to the Island. By bringing in a physician from the outside and convincing the judge of the truth, that the prisoner was very ill, and his friends ready to pay for his treatment, and answer for his reappearance in court when he should be able, Jim had obtained permission to send him to a private place.

" And the best in town," he assured me eagerly.

I saw the four trim uniformed young fellows, headed by a fine-featured, kind, sagacious-looking physician, carrying Bushrod down to the ambulance. They went lightly and skilfully with their neat, covered stretcher; and when they had driven away Jim said to me, with a strong effort at cheerfulness:

" Now, he'll be all right, Miss Carry. We will not tell anybody about it. I don't see why we need. I'll write to Richmond and say to them that Bush is here with me, that he's sick, not able to travel."

" You are as good as gold, Jim," I returned. " What about the people at the office? "

Jim's face darkened. " I'll just let 'em understand

that he's in Virginia, or on his way there," he said. "Hang the office, anyhow! It's none of their business. He left there a week ago, to be gone indefinitely."

I looked at him doubtfully, and he burst out:

"DeWitt's a pleasant enough fellow. I haven't any fault to find with him. But he needn't be so self-righteous. He follows the lead of —"

He broke off, flushing, and amended lamely, "That is, they all act as though Bush was a sort of acknowledged failure. I'll tell them as near nothing as I decently can."

"Yes," I agreed gladly.

"I don't intend to ever let Bushrod know you saw him like this," Jim went on. "It couldn't do any good — such a humiliation as that only breaks a fellow down."

I was choking. "Yes," I whispered. "Oh, no, — never tell him."

"Don't be scared, honey," added Jim, kindly. "He's in bad shape now, but he'll come round all right. Bush is a big stout fellow, you know; and he's been on more than one tear like this, before you ever saw him."

"Not like this, Jim. I don't believe — I —" and halting, unable to continue, I held out to my companion the current number of the Weekly.

It had come into the office just as we left, and I had carried it unopened in my hand since.

As I sat waiting in the lobby, I had tried to divert my mind by turning over its pages; and there upon one of them I found, over Bushrod's pseudonym, and with a wonderful initial, which



carried an incredible load of pain and despair within its inch-square space, three verses called —

AN INVOCATION

Dear my Lord Death, hast thou called me?  
Long have I waited to spouse thee,  
And prayed, but no prayers would arouse thee —  
Well-beloved Death, hast thou called me?

Lo, my Lord Death, I am ready,  
For Life it hath spurned me and shamed me,  
The World it hath shunned me and blamed me.  
Lo, lovely Death, I am ready.

Yea, my Lord Death, I am waiting,  
Waiting the kiss of my lover,  
And his merciful cloak for my cover.  
Yea, blessed Death, I am waiting.

It was a pitiful little coincidence that, when Jim had finished reading these verses, he made the same comment Bushrod himself had made when handing to me those first lines of his.

“Fellow must have felt pretty bad when he wrote that,” Jim said, huskily, his big brown eyes filling with tears, his lip trembling, while his hand clenched shaking on the magazine with the grasp of a hurt child.

It was true that my editor had not seen fit to jest as much as usual when I told him such portion as I felt I could tell him of my visit to the Tombs. Yet he was never, at best, one to whom I could willingly lay bare a thing like this, which was to be held, a carefully guarded secret, in the possession of Jim and myself for many days.

## CHAPTER XXVII.

### “The Amazing Marriage”

“Pipe cat, dance mouse!

We'll have a wedding at our good house.”

I TOLD myself that I had become accustomed to the belief that all was indeed finally over between Frank and me, as people become accustomed to the thought of death. And I knew perfectly, down in the depths of my soul, that no one ever did accustom himself to the thought of death, other than as an abstraction, or really believe that he himself should die. The pain was, I thought, less acute, less pressing and choking, because Frank was away; and was not absolutely deadly, because he was going to return.

Endurance — resignation — I could never compass that; but, give me a little time and much work, I could always achieve some happiness.

And Jim's news of Bushrod had been so very good, that that last insufferable load was greatly lightened. Every day I saw him, at the office or the house, maybe only for a few moments; and he brought me, in the goodness of his kind heart, all the details of Bushrod's condition that his simple mind could grasp or carry.

Our patient had recovered consciousness on the

third day, and appeared to be getting well most properly.

At this point I asked eagerly if I might go to see him, along with Jim. At first Jim was a little embarrassed; but finally his frank good sense prevailed over hesitation, and he spoke to me like a brother.

"You see, he's getting along all right, so far as his body is concerned," he explained. "His mind is where the trouble is. He don't talk — he hardly ever speaks — only to say 'I'm all right, old man,' or 'God bless you,' or 'Don't bother about me.' So I don't know, and the hospital people do not, what he really thinks or believes. There is something held back. He hasn't asked yet how he came to be in the hospital. I can't tell, you know, how much he remembers — where he began to forget."

"Yes — I suppose," I said reluctantly.

"I know I'm right, Miss Carry," Jim insisted. "I know how Bush thinks of you. I never happened to do any drinking, but — well, you just be good and wait; Bush has to be well, and strong, and his old self before he sees you. And it won't be long. He's doing fine. They all say so at the hospital."

So I needs must be content. I was glad to think of Bushrod, mending, and coming back to himself. Meantime, since Jim told me he should be in New York for several weeks and should always see Bushrod every day, I suddenly made up my mind to go away somewhere for a week or two, to make if possible a break in the icy paralysis which was settling upon me, to work out my problem, to patch and rearrange my broken life edifice.

I had never asked for a leave before; but I knew

my request came at an inconvenient season, and I approached my chief with a respectful deference which was, I fear, quite foreign to my usual manner.

Mr. DeWitt received my cap-in-hand civilities with unexpected geniality, and remarked with approval, as he graciously accorded the desired boon,

"It seems you do know how to grind an axe a bit, when it is an implement you really need to have sharpened. I do not doubt that, under sufficient pressure, you would develop a touch of blarney."

The closest friend I ever had, and one of the shrewdest, wholesomest characters I ever knew, used to call me The Cork for a by-name, because, she said, the harder I was plunged to the very bottom of the flood of pain and sorrow, the more prompt and vigorous the "plop!" with which I came up.

I had certainly been dwelling beneath the waters of pain and bereavement for some time, and now there occurred a small, cheerful plop.

"Huh!" I cried, with much more independence (I had got the leave, you know), "a bigger and better-looking man than you told me that, and more too, no longer ago than yesterday."

Mr. DeWitt bore my coarse ingratitude with unchanged sweetness. I thought he was rather pleased to see so much spirit in me. "Indeed," he returned, "both bigger and better-looking? Where did you discover this colossal and beautiful creature?"

I explained:

"He stood at a certain corner in Brooklyn, where I used to take a car every day when I boarded over there. It is a place where cars meet and pass; whole strings of them go along on one line awhile, and then branch off on different ones, you know."

"Yes, I know," said Mr. DeWitt, with a broad grin. "You've a fresh, artless, narrative style."

"D' ye want to hear this thing, or not?" I demanded, my spirits rising as I proceeded.

"Go on, go on," he returned, pacifically.

"Well, there stood there a big, heavy man with a rosy face, and dimples that would make the fortune of a professional beauty, wearing a long, handsome overcoat and a soft hat, and with a thick cane in his hand."

"Stood there — stood there? Was this a graven image, or a wooden figure?"

"Well," I answered, "he seemed to be what Omar Khayyám calls 'The master of the show.' He made the heavy trucks and wagons move on; he stopped and started the cars, and ordered about every wheeled thing on the street. And each time, when he got affairs straightened out, he would wave his stick to the next car and call, 'Come up! Come up!'"

"Oh, the inspector," commented my listener.

"Yes," I assented, "the inspector. One day, when he had, as usual, stopped the car I wanted, lifted and chucked me into it as carefully and skillfully, but with as little personal notice, as though I had been a valuable glass article, I asked the conductor, 'Who is that man? Is this his city?' The conductor laughed, and informed me that the man was the street-car inspector of the line.

"I came along there the other day when there was a tremendous concourse of cars; and about every four seconds this big bass voice was calling out, 'Come up! Come up!' When my car came in sight there was a little delay in getting me to it,

and I seized upon the occasion to say to the man, 'I want you to get St. Peter's job, so that when I come to apply for admittance you will be there to look good-humoured and say, "Come up, come up!"'

"He was just landing me in the car as I promulgated this; and he looked at me with the tickled astonishment you would feel if one of the inanimate objects you daily handle should suddenly rise up and make jokes at you.

"He turned to the next car, shouted 'Come —', glanced back at me, broke out laughing, changed it to 'Move up!' and the last I saw of him he was shaking his head, and the dimples were dancing in and out of his rosy cheeks.

"I came past there yesterday, and the minute he caught sight of me he began to laugh, and called out, 'Oh, you're all right! You don't need me up there. You'll just fire a joke at St. Peter, and while he's doubled up laughing, in you'll go. Yes, and blarney some one out of a good seat, too, I'll bet.'"

"Yes, I see; as you did me (a gentlemanly angel) out of that two weeks' leave — here when there's so much to do, and we are already short-handed. But do not be too puffed up. Don't lay it all to your blandishments. I am good-natured this morning. You may have noticed that I was very complaisant in the matter of the leave," he suggested.

"Not more so than I deserved!" I broke in hastily.

"You may, I repeat, have noticed it. Did it

not occur to you there might be a reason for it?" he inquired.

"Why, aren't my just deserts"—I began.

"You'd better thank the gods you never get 'em—at least in this office," he declared, testily.

"Well, you were about to say?" I ventured, civilly.

"I was about to tell you that the person known to your betters as your boss is going to have a leave, too, a long one," he announced.

"You?" I cried, "are you going away?" and I sat down feeling suddenly rather blank. He nodded, as I sat looking at him, realising in a flash, as I had not yet done, how extensively Mr. DeWitt figured in the practical aspect of my life here in New York. I had always had his acute, kindly criticism, his discriminating judgment. He had resolutely held me to the best I could do, willing to accept of me, or for me, nothing less. This many-sided man turned always toward me a side wholly good and healthful and tonic. Whatever pain and error and disappointment had come into my life here in New York, it had never had any relation to my work or its doing. There, all had been fair and hopeful and satisfactory; and this it seemed to me was largely attributable to Mr. DeWitt's clever intuition and admirable management. Already bereft and darkened, what a heartbreakingly desolate place the editorial office would be to me without his bright, keen, spirited face, and alert, well-groomed figure, his cool, capable, restful personality, to relieve its gloom.

"Are you going soon?" I asked, rather feebly.  
"I hope it won't be before I get off to Texas."

"I think it will," he hesitated. "It is a European trip — quite an extended tour — and we have moved forward the date, rather unexpectedly. Some circumstances" —

I undoubtedly lack many feminine virtues, and am free from a few feminine vices; but I was woman enough to see in this ambiguous phraseology the portent of a wedding journey. "I believe," I cried, with sudden inspiration, "that you are going to be married!"

"Do you know that I believe so too," he responded confidentially.

"Who" — I began, and he interrupted.

"I supposed you had been told of the engagement when you were there last month."

My mind whirled rapidly. "There?" Where had I been?

"Who," I urged, "who has been mad enough —"

"Miss Salem and I were speaking of you," he pursued gravely, "of some plans for your work when we return; and I got the impression that she had told you."

"Miss Salem?" I repeated densely, "what has she to do with it?"

"She has a good deal to do with it," said Mr. DeWitt, in a very quiet tone. "We are to be privately married next week, instead of in January, as was at first intended. We shall be abroad three months, and when we come back the new magazine is to be started. It was in connection with the magazine that we were speaking of you."

Miss Salem! The absolute astonishment in my



mind, the turmoil of ideas and thoughts which burst in upon it, forbade speech.

He thought she had told me of the engagement, the approaching marriage, while I was staying with her at the hotel. The suggestion brought vividly to me the remembrance of that one night's intimate talk, which had made me really know Priscilla Salem. And as I recollected it all, in the light of this announcement, her disquiet, her uncertainty and smothered apprehension were illuminated for me.

He had — choosing one of the two courses open to him in the matter — elected to make his announcement without even a conventional pretence of sentiment. I recalled her voice, with its deep tones of human kindness and tenderness; her face, as it showed in the gray morning twilight, full of emotional promise and possibilities, and wearing already the pathetic prophecy of age. The story of the statuette came back to me, importunate with its illustration. Here, then, was her little plaster Eros — her bogus Love. And she was paying for it all she had — all she was — as I had divined she could. Apparently, she had not even had the heart to tell me, but had left it to come to me thus.

Mr. DeWitt's voice suddenly recalled me to the situation, as I sat staring past him into blank space.

"Your remarks are hardly polite, Miss West."

I started guiltily.

"I make no comment upon the absence of congratulations," — and the ugly little sneer I hated was in his voice and around his mouth, — "but the amenities (might I say the decencies?) of life are

discredited, or at least seriously blown upon, by such sincere and outspoken rudeness. Well?"

I searched clumsily and hastily through all the available spaces of my consciousness for one thing to say to him — one thing that I could say — and sat there silent, the blood surging steadily to my face until it burned painfully beneath his deliberately inquiring glance.

To say, "I congratulate you both, and wish you all the happiness you deserve," when I knew, when I saw as plainly as though it were a matter of packing oranges in a box, that only that in him which was least good, least worthy of respect, went into this marriage, and when he himself showed me he knew I saw it — I could not. The words stuck, not in my throat, but back in my consciousness, before even they could be formed.

When the silence became insupportable, I finally blundered out, "You must excuse me —"

"This is what I have been doing," murmured Mr. DeWitt courteously.

My face burned afresh, and I struggled on. "But I was so surprised — I never thought of such a thing" — and I lapsed again into a discouraged silence, aware that my remark suggested only how thoroughly I felt the unsuitability of the match. I was in no way helped by Mr. DeWitt's composed voice, quietly pursuing this line of comment. "Oh, certainly, it is plain that the thing strikes you as preposterous. You" —

"Mr. DeWitt!" I cried in distress. "Of course you can utterly put me to rout at this sort of thing; you always could; I am not quick or clever. You

can easily make me seem a fool — an offensive fool. But do you want to do it?"

Mr. DeWitt's sneering mood fell away before this direct appeal, as I had not believed it could. "Indeed I do not," he answered with hearty kindness, and he reached his hand toward me; a simple, natural thing I had not had the wit to think of doing.

"Besides," I added, as I gladly took the offered hand, "what earthly difference does it make what I think — what sort of views or ideas I hold?"

"Why, as you infer, none in the world — one would say. And yet — Well, I feel, somewhere in me, a laughable necessity to be understood."

And I was well aware that it was not by me that he needed to be understood; I had only offended him by understanding him too well. It was before that better self of his which he had always shown me, and which I, therefore, in a sense represented, and gave back to him, that he sought uneasily to be justified.

I rose to go, saying that I should see Miss Salen that afternoon, and that I was very glad he had told me. We were once more good friends.

"Tell me," began he, abruptly, with that air of pushing aside conventionalities and going to the heart of things, which had always been between Mr. DeWitt and me a possibility, one lacking in the relations between me and many an older friend, "tell me — when you come sidling, red and silent, into the office, with your finger in your mouth, to confess to me that you have determined to commit matrimony — oh, you will do it sooner or later! — and I am coldly silent or openly disapproving (I

shall be), I should just like to inquire, as a matter of curiosity, not for purposes of publication at all, but between ourselves as man and man — tell me what reason, what excuse you will offer."

Whatever had prompted Mr. DeWitt to ask me such a question, whatever he might know or guess, or think, I at least had, as always, no thought but to stand by my guns. If he even misdoubted that I lacked the courage of my beliefs, or thought to find me in this timid of my views, he was mistaken. His words struck out, like a blow, one of the convictions, which, through whatever doubt and pain and error, never failed me.

"My excuse will be the only one there is," I returned, steadily, though I felt the red again rising in my face. "Love!" and my eyes smarted and my throat ached.

Mr. DeWitt looked down at the proof sheets before him. I took breath and repeated:

"Love — love. What all the world is seeking — what it's starving and freezing for — the foundation of all practical life — the bottom plank of all human building — the only key to unlock, the only door which gives access to, all other good, comfort, advancement, all permanent welfare, happiness, progress. I would marry for love," I said, "with love; only with and for and because of love," and I looked up at him unflinchingly.

"Yes," he agreed, soberly, "and where will you find it?"

I knew then that he was quite ignorant of my love affairs, quite innocent of ulterior meaning when he began to question me.

"Well," I answered, haltingly, for the aching in

my throat increased, and my eyes were filling, "it — it is here," touching my own breast. "I have conceived it — it is mine; and so it must exist also somewhere else. But — but say I never find it in another. Shall I therefore content myself with less — abjure it — throw it away — place myself where it is no longer possible for me to have it, though conceiving it and believing in it?"

"Yes, I see," he hesitated, a little wistfully, "for you" —

"Oh, for me!" I said. "Why not for you, or for any soul that will not accept less? Nobody but Justin DeWitt sets your limitations. No one, no thing — save yourself — can compel you to a lower place at the spirit's table."

"Yes, oh, yes," he assented, not unkindly, but wearily. "It is all one with having ideals, and living up to them. Living up is tiresome work, Miss West," and he smiled at me deprecatingly.

"Well — well — well. We all have our vanities. Mine is the career I have chosen. It is the thing I can do. I'll strike a good sort of gait, — you know I can do that, — and keep pretty well up to the head of the procession. And — I care for it, you know."

"About yourself — you are right. Anything else would be intolerable to you. You must seek it; I'm glad you do." And he looked at me with a surprising, half-wistful kindliness and sweetness, then added, with his inevitable humour, "It's a — well, there should be some one about the office who does that sort of thing. It is — as you say — a thing that don't need finding." Again he held out his hand.

"Trot along then and seek it, and take a sinful man's blessing with you."

I had been on the verge of sobs more than once during the latter part of this talk. Now, as I looked up, I saw, with a shock of surprise that was almost terror, that my editor's keen, brilliant eyes were swimming with unshed tears.

## CHAPTER XXVIII.

### The Pun Therapeutic

**"The good and great will ever shun  
That shameless and abandoned one  
Who stoops to perpetrate a pun."**

FOR some uncertain period after I left Mr. DeWitt I was swamped. I walked aimlessly, seeing not whither.

But when I got righted a bit, got the sea water out of my eyes and began to take stock of the situation, the thought of Genevieve flashed upon me. It was an hour when she was always at her desk in the office. Her place there had been vacant. I was instinctively aware that she had received the announcement of the approaching marriage, and, finding some pretext, had crept away to work out her little sum.

Should I go to her? Could I help her at all to set the figures straight — to find possible errors? Could I point out to her where she had failed to "carry one?" Could any one ever do any of these things for another? And if one could, and could thereby bring the correct answer, the true solution, would it be well? Would it be, to the one so helped, a present help and an eventual hindrance and injury?

When I arrived at the end of all this debatement,

I found myself mounting the steps to Genevieve's room.

"Who is it?" her voice inquired, when I knocked.

"Genevieve, it is I," I answered.

"Oh! Come in, then," said she.

I opened the door and stepped in, then drew back to close it and go away.

"Oh, no, don't do that. Come in," Genevieve repeated. She was sitting at the table, her arms thrown out on it, her head laid down sidewise upon them. She had evidently wept herself into a state of exhaustion. The visage, turned toward me, was ashen and drawn, the great, soft, tan-coloured eyes swollen and inflamed. This was the girl at whom I had raged for being cold as a fish.

"Sit down. I am so glad you came. I want to talk to you. I will go bathe my face," declared this surprising young woman. In the doorway she turned her pale countenance and tragic eyes a moment toward me, and added, with a little catch of a laugh, "I suppose I am some sort of salt water fish to-day. I certainly do seem to swim in it!"

I could hear her splashing heartily, manfully; and presently, glancing through the doorway, I saw her vigorously towelling her face, so like Genevieve and so unlike a weeping woman's dabbing, flinching action.

"There," she announced, coming back, "I probably look less like a fool, and more like a human being."

It was Genevieve's way, too, to take hold of the situation as though the unacknowledged under-



standing between us had been an openly expressed one.

"You think," she began, very quietly, "that I am acting like a fool now; but I give you my word, these are my first sane and sensible moments for months."

"You do me good!" I cried.

"Oh, yes, I am through — I am done. I have cried my eyes out, and there's an end."

"I'm sorry I am going back to Texas so soon," I observed, with some vague impression that I had just met Genevieve and would like to pursue the acquaintance.

"I am sorry, too," she answered, simply.

"Don't you want to go with me?" I exclaimed, impulsively.

Genevieve laughed — actually laughed. "What a baby you must take me for," she commented. "Run away! No, indeed. My work is here. My place is here. Nothing is changed."

"No," I agreed, hesitatingly, "I believe you are right."

"I do not know that I should wonder," she remarked, consideringly, "that you take me for a spineless imbecile. You have never seen anything in me to suggest the contrary. You do not even know how abject an idiot I have been. Why, Miss West, I had come to have so little confidence in — so little respect for — myself, my own force and dignity, that I almost thought the only thing to do was to run away — away from my own silliness and weakness, you know! About two weeks ago, I had an offer from the *Ladies' Work Basket* people and was for days on the point of accepting it."

"I suppose they are sound," I ventured, "and — and pay pretty well."

"Sound! Yes, they are sound; and they offered me a fair salary. Miss West, you do not know — I will warrant you have not an idea — what my qualifications are, what I was brought over here to do. Have you?"

"Why, no," I admitted, "I supposed your fashion work —"

"Fashions!" flung out Genevieve. "But I cannot wonder. And I imagine what my people would think of me set to edit a household paper! 'How to Take out Ink Stains,' 'A Pretty Pink Luncheon!'"

"But, Genevieve —"

"Wait," she interrupted me, quietly. "Miss West, I was brought over here to edit and revise scientific text-books. I was supposed (when Miss Salem met me at my uncle's, in Oxford — he is one of the lecturers at Magdalen) to be quite a coming person in biology."

I was as astounded as though Genevieve had told me she was a consummate tight-rope performer. I gazed at her a moment, fairly opened-mouthed, then sat down feebly.

It all came over me with a rush. The past months with Genevieve were illuminated. There was no longer anything really queer about her. She had only been made to seem queer by being placed in such a false position toward her whole world.

I could see it all now, how she had brought to the writing of fashion articles the scientific mind, scientific methods, and training. Her intense unswerving literalness had been just this. This was

the root of her clearness, brevity, and directness, that style which I had said sat as appropriately upon her fashion articles as a suit of chain armour on a ballet-dancer.

And, after all, how perfectly natural. Miss Bucks was the sort of person who, if she were not actually engaged in doing a thing — in showing it forth — simply sunk it. There was no boast, no advertisement to her. Indeed, her attainments and abilities seemed detached from and of too small importance to her.

“But why in the world did Miss Salem bring over such a light as you to write fashion stuff? Couldn’t she find any home-bred stock, that she should put Pegasus to plough in that sort of style?” I asked.

“Miss Salem had nothing to do with it,” returned Genevieve, energetically. “I have always felt that she was disappointed, if not disgusted with me; she had good cause to be. When I came in, Mr. DeWitt was running in the weekly service a series of articles they called Popular Astronomy. My affairs were not just ready; so, for the moment I was set to revise this astronomy stuff — it needed it.

“He was having continual trouble with his fashion and household departments; there were unreliable people in them. So he asked me one day if there was anything about the work I could — and would — help with.”

I grinned irrepressibly.

“Yes,” assented Genevieve, “I was as well suited to do such stuff as the woman he had at it would have been to do my scientific writing — as you were to do the various stupid things he asked



of you from time to time. But the difference between us was that if he had asked me to scrub the office floor, I should have scrubbed it — and scrubbed it to his taste — and probably have blacked his boots for good measure.”

“Don’t, Genevieve!” I ejaculated.

“Oh, it doesn’t hurt in the least,” she smiled, calmly. “A small brother of mine used to tell a story of a ‘natiff nigger,’ who was found by a missionary pounding his finger with a stone, and who explained that he did it because it felt so good when he left off. I have left off, and I feel very comfortable, indeed.”

I found myself more and more inclined to pursue Genevieve’s acquaintance.

“So I am going to remain just here, and do the work I came to do. To show him? To show them? No, indeed. Because it is the work which suits me. I can do it well, and in it lies my salvation and my hope of success. I could go home, but such work is much better paid in the United States than at home” —

I laughed out, hopefully.

Genevieve smiled. “Father always said that I had not an ounce of worldly wisdom; but I think I am quite able to tell upon which side my bread is buttered,” she observed, with infantile shrewdness.

Genevieve’s “worldly wisdom” brought to my mind a little talk with Mr. DeWitt, nearly a year ago. He had used the phrase then, and “Worldly wisdom!” I retorted, “what is that, to your thinking?”

“Well,” he expounded, looking at me with slightly narrowed eyes, “it is something which is apt to be

pronounced by the young and untried palate extremely bitter. But it is — owing to this evil vapour which is our atmosphere — very wholesome, not to say necessary; like quinine, you know, in the jungles of Africa. It is rarely to be found in small and quiet places, or, indeed, anywhere away from the great centres of life.”

“And therefore I came for it to New York?” I suggested.

He nodded, and went on, “It is a thing that cannot be purchased with money at the apothecary’s; it is only to be had in exchange for cherished ideals, youthful illusions, a believing heart, and such like toys. But,” with a little laugh, “let them go, let them all go — that’s a plucky girl! Never complain of emptiness and loss, when you’ve made your trade. You won’t, I know. We’ll never be called upon to listen to your lamentations over the rifled caskets of these your young treasures. For they are worse than useless, positively detrimental, and you have the sense to see this, and the courage to admit it to yourself. They will only handicap you in the fierce race; while this same worldly wisdom is a precious commodity, possessing which nearly all other things can be attained — save those which went to buy it.”

Now, I told Miss Bucks something of this. “Genevieve,” I said, “Mr. DeWitt has manifested that which he calls worldly wisdom pretty fully. And what a pitiful thing it is. How poor it makes him. He premises that it is bitter; he admits that he must pay for it what one most loves and values (along with some trash) and we are glad we haven’t it — aren’t we?”

"Yes, oh, yes," returned Genevieve, absently. "I think I have enough, of the decenter sort, to get on with."

I saw with surprise that she was less interested in Justin DeWitt, his theories and his life, than I. I had not believed it in feminine nature to turn so promptly and completely away from sentimental disaster. Her attitude was wholly male.

Presently she remarked, "I was always supposed to be a hard-working person, with some abilities and very little sentiment. I thought this, honestly, myself. Now, it appears there was what I have heard you describe in others as 'a fool streak,' which had to be worked out of me. I have had my lesson. It is over and done with, and it is a glad woman I am."

"Genevieve, Genevieve!" I said; "it's what we all have to have some time. It's the only way we can learn. We must be taught by Life herself; kindly, and with monishings, if we will learn so; harshly, and with birchings, if they are necessary."

"Oh, I needed what you call the 'birchings,'" interrupted Genevieve calmly. "I had to have them, and liberally, too."

"I believe every plucky youngster in Life's school does," I declared. "And do you know, I'm coming to think that those lessons which were most sternly taught are not only most valuable, but actually dearest in the retrospect."

"Agreed!" echoed Genevieve, in this new, deep, hearty tone of her fine voice. "Oh, I agree with you there."

"All honour the birch, then," I cried; "deep may

its roots strike, high may its branches wave above its fellows in the forest! For me, Genevieve, I would not — no, I would not — have been spared one thwack that I have gotten in the wholesome fray, nor call back one dear folly which I have lost.

“Because they have taken away what was to me my fine white bread and red wine, shall I therefore refuse the oaten cake and the homely ale? No, no, I am a hungry creature, I do not like to go fasting and sorrowful, for so I am a grief to myself and those about me. Since those things are gone, since I must not by any means have them back,” and now the blessed tears were running down my face, “I will no longer consider them, but eat the more of the honest black bread, and drink more deeply the wholesome bitter of the ale, and — and fare the further daily, that I may sleep at night, despite remembrance which follows me.”

“What a gift you have for putting things poetically,” exclaimed Genevieve; “you people who are imaginative writers can — fortunately for you — get your ideas of despair at second-hand.”

“Imaginative writers, is it!” I echoed, and laughed a little bitterly. “My dear Genevieve, do not deceive yourself. It is the qualification I lack — imagination. Don’t you know that every human soul that amounts to shucks has been led — by some compulsion or other — all along this pathway that we — that you — have been treading? Why, some of them, that won’t learn, go tramping up and down it with bleeding feet the greater part of their lives. You credit me with much imagination, Genevieve. I could never write one convincing word about tooth-



ache, save as I had writhed in the most fell and deadly throes of toothache."

"Oh, indeed! I never supposed so of you," remarked Genevieve.

"But it is even as I say," I returned. "And for despair—why, pray, should one despair? While there is life in your body, light in your brain, there is the same chance there always was. The world, I find, moves on while you stop to take stock of your bruises and the thumps which stunned you; it holds blithely and busily and grandly and terribly and wholesomely to its way. Will you go—will you go? Quick! Oh, yes, *I'll go*. Every pulse answers yes to the stirring invitation. D'ye think I'll ever sit in useless twilight and inert sadness? Not I, when I can help it. *I'll go*. And though I might stagger to the starting-place, yes, though I should limp miserably at the outset, I tell you it would not be long; for my feet,—these feet that have dallied along the little tender, shaded, silence-haunted pathway of the Ideal, to their own wounding—they love the pace. My whole nature loves the air of labour, of effort, and the stirring companionship of my friendly foe. It leaps into the refreshing sweep of competition, rivalry, the square fight where no odds is given, but honest blow for blow."

"Yes," assented Genevieve, "that is all right. To every man his method. You fight with a weapon, my dear Cara, I work with a tool; you come to Life's convention with whoops and hurrahs, riding upon one of those bronchos; and if I go there on foot, it is because that is my way, and I shall arrive none the less certainly."





"Pretty good!" I commented. "'Life's convention' — 'whoops and hurrahs' — 'fight with a weapon' and 'work with a tool!' Talk about 'imaginative writers!' You remind me of the old woman 'who wasn't no arithmeticker, but was some on figgers o' speech.'

"I guess I'll go rope my broncho (you're sure he isn't a donkey? Oh, *say* it isn't a donkey!) immediately; I have some stuff to get up before I leave; and he is my Pegasus, I suppose — or my 'pony,' or my hobby, or my pack-horse — and I need him this minute."

After I had closed the door, I opened it again and poked my head inside.

"Oh, Genevieve!" I called. "Here is a paradox you have made. 'One of those bronchos' is the most incorrigible of originals. He is informal, you know, irregular, aberrant, not to say egregious. Would he — in such circumstances as you describe in your recent burst of metaphor — could he become, or be denominated, a *conventional* steed?"

Genevieve looked at me blankly a moment; then her pale face with its pitiful swollen eyes broke into laughter, and she cried delightedly, "It is a pun! Oh, isn't it a funny one! If you ride him to a convention — oh, yes — can he be called a conventional — oh, isn't it funny!"

She added with admiration and envy, "I never could make them." And I shut the door upon her laughing "How funny!"

"What says the poet?" I murmured, as I went down-stairs, "'Nothing useless is or low' — no, not even a pun. But who (save me) would have thought



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of it as an antidote for blighted affections? Nobody, I'll warrant.

"But who shall make me a pun, to ease this aching in my left side? It is the physician who cannot heal himself."

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## CHAPTER XXIX.

### A Bridge of Days

“ And is thy heart so strong  
As for to leave me thus  
Who have loved thee so long  
In wealth, and woe among?  
And is thy heart so strong  
As for to leave me thus?  
Say nay — Say nay ! ”

It was late November. I had picked up a brown leaf — the last of the falling year — in the street on my way down to the office. There was no tree in sight; it had come far from its place of nativity. And I had a sense of kinship with it, this small estray of nature, blown whispering and seeking along the street of naked brick and stone.

I was home from my vacation, and Jim had met me with cheering news of Bushrod, who would, it was hoped, be able to see his friends within a week.

The DeWitts (how strange that sounded!) had now been gone nearly three weeks. I had felt saddened whenever I thought of Miss Salem's dreary little marriage ceremony. She had not asked me to remain in New York for it. Indeed, I realised, after the hurried interview in which I bade her good-bye, that she did not wish me to do so. It was to be entirely private, she told me. She and

Mr. DeWitt were both without immediate family. Those with whom their business and social relations were closest would, some of them, necessarily be absent; and so they had thought best to exclude all.

Yet I noted gladly that the air of uncertainty and disquiet which she had lately worn was now replaced by a look of calmness and content that very nearly approached happiness. I was thankful, too, that her mind was so occupied with her own concerns that she had no thought to spare to mine.

But when, after my return, Mrs. Corcoran told me of the marriage and going away, she spoke so brightly and shed such a pleasant, hopeful light on it all, that I was cheered and comforted.

The wedding, she declared, though strictly private, was very beautiful. Miss Salem's gown was a priceless and exquisite thing of filmy lace; there had been a profusion of flowers, and Bishop DeWitt, a distant cousin of Justin DeWitt's, had performed the ceremony, the only witnesses being Miss Salem's aunt, who was her housekeeper in New York, and a very old gentleman I had once or twice met at her house, who had been her father's partner in his earliest small venture in the publishing business.

The Corcoran household, with a large contingent of Salem Publishing Company people and other friends went to the pier to see the newly married couple off on their wedding journey.

"You would not believe," she told me, "how happy and suitable and well-matched they looked — so settled, so wonted, and — well, in such perfect sympathy and accord. The difference in age — and on the wrong side — was noticeable, of course; but



really, Cara, outside of that, they were as well-suited, well matched a pair as I ever saw."

"Bless your sweet heart!" I answered, "you ought to be a newspaper woman, and write personal matter for your livelihood — wedding reports, and obituary articles, and such; you see so much that is good and hopeful in people and their affairs."

Now, the office had had a cable from the DeWitts in London.

Both were loaded with commissions for the new magazine and for the general publishing house. They were making quite a business trip of it.

Our young lovers were married soon after my return.

"He" received an offer of a very advantageous position in Mexico, and to leave "her" was out of the question. "He" came up one Saturday night with the telegram; they were quietly married Sunday, and left us Monday.

The thought of our lovers doing anything sudden made us all quite giddy. Mrs. Corcoran went bewilderedly about with various unrelated articles in her hand, crying out to the casual passer-by that she wanted things to be right, even if we did have but fifteen minutes in which to do it all.

And Mr. Corcoran had to be forcibly restrained from giving them a piano for a wedding present. That was because "she" was musical, and "he" had always shown such divine patience in listening to "her" playing. When argued out of this, Mr. Corcoran brought home the information that good bread was almost unknown in Mexico because the flour was poor, and the proposition that Corydon



and Phyllis be laden with something like a half car-load of Fancy Triple X.

"As if they cared anything about bread!" ejaculated Mrs. Corcoran, with wifely scorn for his lumbering male intelligence.

Mr. Corcoran sighed. "All this marrying in haste has turned my brain," he admitted. "I can't think connectedly."

"Could you ever?" inquired Mrs. Corcoran, with the suave frigid sweetness of ice-cream.

"The next," pursued Mr. Corcoran, "the next in line for execution are, I take it, this young person here and the Man in Texas."

The Man in Texas was an old character in Mr. Corcoran's domestic fiction, and he walked whenever other resources failed; so, "There are," I responded, tranquilly, "five hundred and twenty thousand men (more or less) in Texas. To which particular gentleman do you refer?"

"To that brave but devoted individual," responded Mr. Corcoran, pensively, almost plaintively, "who is waiting his doom (and you) somewhere out in that exceedingly flat country you have quite frequently mentioned and described. The man who has just now an excellent opportunity to flee, and no knowledge of why he should do so."

"See here," I said, "you think that is funny, of course; but I do not mind telling you that your stupidity is so far right that I might, when I came here, have been labouring under the hallucination that there was — to adopt your phrase — a 'Man in Texas.' I have settled it now, however, and settled it negatively. There is no 'Man in Texas' — there is no man for me anywhere but here," and I thumped

my chest. "I have found him to be a reliable, stout-hearted person; ready to go with me. At present (much as I'd like to oblige you with another 'wedding while you wait'), we are not asking for other companionship—it is companionship I mention, you notice, not captaincy."

Mr. Corcoran, bless him, warmed to my discourse. He looked at me with quick understanding. "Yes!" he cried. "Why not? Why shouldn't a girl feel so? I've often wondered at them. Why should a woman of brains and ability, one that has force and courage to follow her own course, be so anxious to meet some man and hand over the ship to him— to virtually say, 'Here, take it; sail it where you please!' Gad! I couldn't do it; and I'm hanged if I see why any woman of character seeks it. I'd rather go lonesome.

"Look at the Madame. 'Tis little she knew the treasure she was getting, of course, and yet she would have me; she would not take a courteous no— nor several of them."

And Mrs. Corcoran contemptuously refusing to rise to this bait, he walked away, singing "Haste to the wedding," out of tune.

I had lived a strange dual existence in those days before I left for my vacation. The poor drudge my mind, which of its own motion went following Frank's footsteps through all imagined ways, must make some effort toward its daily, weekly stunt.

I would begin a piece of work, only to fall suddenly blank and helpless in the midst of it, my truant mind creeping away to hang after the one object to which it was ever voluntarily devoted. Dragged back by the shoulder and thrust upon the

unloved task, it slaved sullenly, and only so long as it was held there by the grasp of unceasing vigilance.

I sat at table and the food was placed before me, the talk went on about me. My vacant eyes were on the plate, my poor heart was away, setting up a thousand inquiries, questing, questing, crying, pleading in the darkness after Frank.

Where was he? Whither bent his steps? Upon what were those compelling eyes looking? What employment occupied the hands I loved? And oh — what did he think? This, with a thousand variations, was always the piteous repetend. This one unsleeping ache found never any assuagement.

Did he look up now from the book he read or the work he bent above, and sigh with that catching breath I knew so well? And at the stab of the thought, I would start to consciousness of my real surroundings, and look about upon the others with eyes of sheer anguish.

I usually found at such times that some one had addressed a question to me, or there was a half-completed sentence, the first portion of which I was supposed to know, and to which I was expected to respond.

I remember going one day into the speckless little kitchen to get some hot water for my paste-pot. Lottie, our waitress, of whose absurd prettiness I had made complaint when the sending of young lovers came upon me, stood at a table rubbing some glasses.

The heat was not yet on in the house, and I sat down for a moment by the cosy range. I heard a faint sniffing behind me, and looked around to find



that Lottie was patiently wiping away tears as she polished tumblers.

Then I recalled, what my selfish pain had made me forget, that there was no longer any young man *en evidence*, no Sabbath-day loiterings to taunt my loneliness, and that Mrs. Corcoran had said Lottie was moping.

"Oh, ja," that damsel interrupted her suppressed grief to say, "'Tiss true, Miss Carry. Wimmenss iss poor weak creaturess—and menss—they knowss it."

She spoke as though resuming an intermitted conversation, and I replied to her with such comforting assurances as I could find.

Everybody was very good to me. Nobody seemed to notice. I went about more than usual. I went to church, to the office, to the theatre; I went wherever anybody asked me to go. And everywhere—visiting, receiving visits, sitting at table, working at my desk, moving in the crowded street,—so much more vital was the thought of Frank than anything about me, that if death had struck me down, with but one moment for a cry between the stroke and extinction, I should have cried his name.

I had planned a dreary little outing at a place I was sure I should not like, when I received a telegram asking me to meet Baxter Lord and his wife at the dock and go with them to Old Point for a two weeks' stay. The Lords were cousins of Jim's, and old friends of mine. Mr. Lord was a cattle baron in the Texas Panhandle; they were very rich, very generous, lovable, childless people, between whom and myself there was an affection of long standing.

It was years afterward that I knew this summons, which was so like the Lords' usual method as to have excited no surprise in me, had been arranged by cable. Jim caught them in London, on the point of sailing for New York, and dictated the message which I received, explaining in more detail that I was run down and homesick and needing my friends, when he met them on the deck of the homeward bound steamer.

My two weeks did me a wonderful amount of good. Jim was with us a part of the time, so that what with the out-door life, the society of Jim and his cousins — always both tonic and restful to me — and the entire change, the breaking off of all unhealthy trains of thought, I returned to New York almost myself once more.

## CHAPTER XXX.

### The Phantom Caravan

"Why linger, why turn back, why shrink, my heart?

Thy hopes have gone before : from all things here

They have departed ; thou shouldst now depart !"

WITH sight of the familiar squares and streets, with breath of the atmosphere Frank breathed, though he was not then there, came a pitiful revulsion, and the loss, as it seemed to me, of all I had gained.

"It is the place," I said. "Here is where we loved each other, and where I can no longer live when this is not so. I will not go near the office again. I will send my copy in by mail. I will once more try new scenes and new people. I will go —"

"But not too far!" clamoured my cowardly heart, "not too far! There is surely room in this great city for a new life, and new associates. There's Podunk, and Harlem, there's Probability Avenue, Promising Square, and Try-it-a-whack Street. And there are the Pretty-Good Smiths, the Unknown Browns, the Great-Potential Butlers, and the Un-developed-Resources McWhirters — all God's children, too; and none of them will look at me with eyes that have seen Frank.

"I believe," I assured myself, "that among people who did not know Frank, from whose lips I need not dread to hear his name, I could be well."

Ah, to make a long, long story very short, when no letter came, when I got home and found no indirect message from Frank, when I went to the office and had no word from him, except that when I asked I was told he remained in Virginia, and that his mother was believed to be better, — then I broke down.

It was three months since I had heard from him directly. Now I knew that he was alive — that he was well. And a feeling of exasperation and weariness came over me. How long? — how much? — what more? I wondered. When would I be quit of this madness, and at peace?

I would not protest. He did not. He seemed to be able to endure without a groan the thing which had come upon us. There was no use crying out for the mountains to fall upon me, nor for the seas to rise and swallow me. I did not desire to be out of a world where Frank was; I only longed to madness for some word from him.

Three-fourths of the time when I was awake I was mentally writing letters to him, all of which began, "Oh, Frank, how can you? How can you have the heart to do it?" I was spiritually upon my knees, begging him to at least send me some word, to tell me that he suffered, too, and that he knew now that what I did was not wanton, cruel, unnecessary, but was dictated by my love for him, as well as my caring for my own soul.

Sometimes I thought of the dumb wall which was now between us as a contemptuous silence, a cruel

thing; more often I gave him the grace of believing that he thought what he did was well done, and best for both of us.

I decided finally that I would write to him — a simple, friendly letter, such as I might write to any one whom I had loved. I would entreat him to be friends, not to let this hideous blackness shut down over what had been the fair country of our love.

When my heart ached hardest, I told myself that I had said to Frank — in action at least — that I must give him up because he interfered with my work — my individual career. And I went on, in bitter irony and self-scourging, to say that the work was here now, the career waiting, and certainly no interference from Frank to prevent my being perfectly happy.

Mr. DeWitt had left me a carefully planned commission for a delightful Southwestern trip. To the man who sat now at his desk (and did his work very ill) I made excuses — I should have found my statements promptly sifted had my editor been there to receive them.

And so I lingered, ashamed to do so, dreading to meet Genevieve, who was expected back soon from a small vacation, hoping that there might come a letter, a message, Frank's return — anything but to go away from this blank emptiness.

In the midst of my hesitations, I received a message from Genevieve; she had come back with the Canadian friends whom she had been visiting, and was now at the hotel with them, and she asked me to call, setting an hour at which I might do so.

I was late for my engagement, and when the bell-



“‘I DECIDED FINALLY THAT I WOULD WRITE TO HIM’”





boy showed me up I found Genevieve dressing to go out to the opera. She was not due at the office for a week, and had decided to take that portion of her vacation in New York.

After she had greeted me, she begged my indulgence and seated herself once more that the hairdresser might complete her coiffure.

I fairly gasped as I looked at her. The arms and shoulders which her low dress displayed were Juno-like, and of the whiteness of marble; her brownish eyes were alight and glowing, the rose pink which I had thought only exercise could bring, bloomed on her cheek; and the little dark Frenchwoman behind her chair was piling up the masses of shining hair with skilled fingers and many exclamations of delight.

There was no manner of doubt about it, Genevieve not only was a transformed being in evening dress, but she knew it, and thoroughly enjoyed it.

I said something of this sort, when the hairdresser finished, and Genevieve came trailing her shimmering gown across the room to the table where her gloves, fan, and flowers lay. "I do love a frock with a tail," she admitted, with a sigh of satisfaction, looking back at her train. "I have not had this one on since the reception the Women's Economic Club gave me when I first came over."

She turned upon me a queer glance which reminded me of the old Genevieve. "I was wearing this frock when I first met our mutual friend, Mr. DeWitt. I indulged in sentiment regarding it, for some time. I needed an evening gown, however, so I got it out a week ago and let Madame Ribot freshen it up a bit."



"You've been freshening up more things than frocks, it appears to me," I said, enviously.

Genevieve laughed. "I have indeed," she agreed, promptly. "Violets were the only flowers he ever gave me; and here, when cousin Rupert sends up a nosegay of them, I do not bedew them with tears as I might once have done; I pin them on and wear them. It is a good thing to get rid of foolish, false sentiment;" and she threw me a shrewd glance, and a smile.

"Jim is going back to Texas," I hastened to inform her. "He will be up to say good-bye, and then go on home with me to bid farewell to the folks there."

"When are you going West?" asked Genevieve, abruptly.

Genevieve had not outgrown her fondness for bombarding her friends with those great swabby lumps of truth, or cuffing them with unwelcome inquiries.

I muttered something about having some work to do; but she interrupted me, "I should not think you would hang about New York when you have a commission to Texas. I am sure you would be much better off riding one of those ponies about, and seeing your old friends, than you are here."

I resented the imputation, but it haunted me, and it must have lain in my subjective mind, for it bore fruit later.

As Jim and I were walking up to Seventy-Fourth Street he told me of his plans for Bushrod.

"He's coming out to my Devil's River sheep ranch, as soon as he is well enough to travel comfortably. He ought to be now — a great fine fellow



like that; what he is fooling along so slowly for I can't see."

"Oh, that is just the thing for him!" I cried. "It will be delightful for you both."

"You're mighty right, it will," agreed Jim. "And when I get Bush out there, I'll take him in for a partner and keep him."

Then he added, "What about yourself, Miss Carry?" and looked very carefully straight ahead of him. "Suppose you let go of New York, too, and come back and write us some more fine Texas stuff? Give us some more poetry like those 'Lyrics of the Trail,' or the 'Cowboy's Hymn to the Night;' or another rattling story like 'Raynor's Ranch' and 'Shorty and the Seven Bars.' You really belong to us, you know."

When Jim was gone back to Texas, Genevieve not yet returned to her desk, and no message had come from Bushrod, the office and my life were indeed dreary things.

Finally, driven by despair, my heart turned to the one thing which I had of Frank — the big book. First, my mind hovered about the subject, once so distasteful to me. I got out the note-book which I had devoted to it. The suggestions therein were, I decided languidly, very good indeed.

One afternoon when it was storming so that I did not care to go out, and Teddy, after keeping me company for an hour or so, had fallen asleep, I suddenly began and wrote a fine chapter — then put my head down on the table and wept because there was no one to share the triumph with — no one to praise and approve me.

Teddy awakened, and, locking his little arms tightly

around my neck, cried, "Oh, Tarry! Oh, Tarry! Don't w'ite it if it hurts 'oo so!" and we wept together upon my excellent chapter, then dried each other's tears.

Then, Mr. Corcoran came home and told me Miss Bucks was writing in the little Tenth Street studio, on her beloved, long anticipated Chemical Encyclopedia. I went the very next day and began regular work on the big book.

My emotions were strange and mingled. I asked myself what Frank would think, and where was my womanly pride? Then, with a wave of deeper feeling, I said, "Why should such a consideration weigh with me? Why do I inquire whether he would — in my place — do as I am doing, or be bitter over the conclusion that he would never make any concession. He is himself, and I am I. And it is Frank I love — not I."

With such subterfuges I quieted my heart, and the big book throve apace. I perceived, now compulsion was removed, that I really could do this sort of thing very well indeed.

This kept the days moving, but the nights were beginning to be once more a horror to me.

At last Mr. Corcoran handed me, one evening, a letter from the office, addressed in a familiar hand, and bearing the Richmond postmark.

It was at the dinner-table, and my soup choked me, my fish was as the meat of serpents, and my chair a rack, till I could crawl away to my own little cubiculum, shut the door and be alone with that letter.

The world sung and spun about me. Would it be kind? What would he say? It was very thin



and light — a mere note. I collected such outstanding breath as I could, and tore open the envelope with cold, shaking fingers.

Why — oh, why — oh, why! Why are we made so piteously apt and capable, so ordered and strung and adjusted for this exquisite suffering?

Absolutely terror-smitten to look at it, I held it in my hand long after it was open, covering the words it might choose to say to me. It was fearful to me to feel the fresh-roused agony with which I looked down at those shielding fingers, saying, "Oh, if he would but have one moment of loving weakness! Oh, if this might be, that he would make me cling to him despite myself, and worship him for ever, by showing me a love and a weakness like my own!

"But he will not. No, no, not he! I may be weak and loving for both. He will never so far forget his pride; he — And yet, he has written."

Then I turned the note out upon the table, and found in it a cheque. It was from a Richmond paper which had, months ago, bought a bit of my stuff, and only now printed and paid for it. And the clerk who mailed the cheque had a handwriting something like Frank's!

Once, for a whole long day I kept an appreciable distance ahead of my pursuing disquiet — for a long, busy, wholesome day. And, encouraged, I again made friends with my little bed. Then suddenly, in the trustfulness of rest and approaching sleep, it took me by the throat, the passion of love and longing. It rolled back upon me like a blinding, strangling sea. I sprang up and, with a dressing-gown thrown about me, sat on the side of the bed.

Out of the blackness of darkness which covered me leaped, flash-like, the picture of his face, the compelling eyes softened and lightening upon me in tenderness; the chin — that chin which always made my heart afraid — not pushed forward, the grim mouth smiling, the haughty spirit melted, the whole man bending toward, seeking, inviting me.

It grasped my heart like a strong hand; it swept the breath from my lips. I could almost never weep, when I was deeply hurt or moved. It was a thing commonly denied me. As I struggled in this big black tidal wave of choking emotion, I heard some one groan, and then realised with a dull astonishment, that it must have been I.

Next moment, a blast of recollection and impatience blew across the suffering, fever-distraught country of my mind. I leaped up from the bedside, and stood tense and rigid in the middle of the room. I flung my arms abroad, and looked angrily about me, crying:

“Why do I suffer this a day — an hour? Why stay here and endure these corroding agonies — so groundless, so unreal? Think of the plains! Think of the great green-brown stretches, free, limitless, — a good horse under one, the open plain beneath the open sky above, the eye unchecked, from rim to rim — the whole world yours — the world where only God lives; the Gulf-breeze — God’s very breath — blowing keen and strong in your face as you gallop, cleansing all that world — and your own sick mind — of stain and soil and pain!

“Shall I stay here struggling vainly in this net of pain and error, running this Indian gauntlet where every hope and sentiment and wish of my



heart, all my purposes and beliefs and ideals, and the fixed principles, stand in a night-long row on either side, with scourges in their hands, while I flee between them?

"Should I stupidly endure this, while the plains are there, with their breath of balm, their air of healing and renewing? When Nipper and Little-Bronc and Glass-Eye are running free over the *Ojo Bravo* pastures, and my great, deep, double-cinched 'cow girl' hangs in the storeroom at the *Ojo Bravo* ranch-house?

"I will not — I will no longer. I see it now. It is with me, here, as with that man who prayed to Jove from the low lands for health, and to whom the god promised the boon if it were prayed for from the mountain top.

"These bonds," I said, "cut my flesh till the blood runs down; these clouds of pain and doubt blind my eyes so that I cannot see God's face; this ceaseless hammering of never-answered questions deafens my ears to the voice of peace and truth. It is out there that I am to go — there where health and God are, and the soul may find itself and him — and peace."

When Mr. Corcoran came home and found the big trunk in the small entry, in process of being packed, he regarded the proceedings for some time with a mildly pensive eye. Finally he glanced up at me where I stood, wadding millions of square miles of tissue-paper about the Japanese dragon and other small and precious possessions. He sighed, smiled quizzically, and shook his head, all at once. "I rather misdoubt this business, Texas," said he. "You've been much to us, Texas, very much; and

my heart misgives me that we could have better spared a better man."

"Oh, I don't know," remarked Mrs. Corcoran, wearily (she was feeling rather severely the reaction from the wild clash and shock of the sudden wedding).

To me, she said, "You're hardly a bit like a person from Texas, any more. I don't see but you behave very much like other people."

"Well," I answered, submissively, "you took me in hand with considerable vigour, and set to work to educate me up — or down — to a metropolitan standard. I have changed a goodish bit. Aren't you pleased? Have you educated me clear out of your liking?"

"Of course not," returned Mrs. Corcoran, a little pettishly for her, "but, oh, how we do miss Mr. Baxter!"

And they would miss me, too, for my papers were all made out; yes, I had earned my honourable discharge. I was going to the Southwest, with that roving commission which Mr. DeWitt had adapted to my abilities, as a French costume is fitted to one's form, so that it should bind me nowhere and fit me everywhere, and always make the best of me and the most of my natural advantages.

And it was ho for Texas! For the whole thing — Panhandle, Staked Plains, and all of Mexico this time! for Pullman cars, stages, buckboards, lumber wagons, ewe-necked, gable-roofed, sharp-spined, frazzle-tempered, dish-faced, wild-eyed mustangs! For strange shifts and queer goes — for bear hunts with no bears, cat hunts with no cats, sweeping winds, blazing suns, all-out-doors, and



general turned-looseness. Camping expeditions — nights on the bald prairie, with a row of toes round the fire, my head off somewhere in the coolness, my eyes looking up again — as they used — into the same far, unresponding Texas sky, wondering, with a sudden pain of loneliness in my heart, what it all might be for — what the good of it all.

But after night, day comes again! And ho for round-ups and races and all sorts of excursions — for life, movement, change — and, above all, work — work — work! Good work, to an end and with a purpose.

In this ho-for-the-tented-field, take-love's-cruelties-out-of-the-armed-foe spirit, brave and useful things have been done by men; why, I inquired, might not there be something in it for a woman?

I would go back — and yet not I. The same brash young person who came out of Texas could never go back there, for she was now no more. I might not know all I thought I did now, but I certainly came a deal nearer it than I did a year before.

And these streets and squares and byways filled with thronging life, which had witnessed my happiness and my despair, at which I had sometimes laughed and sometimes wept; this place which had sometimes figured itself to me as a prison, and sometimes as a playground, and which had in both aspects grown dear to me, these would, I knew, grow dearer with the miles that should separate us.

I used to think — as most provincials do — that only one spot, and that a very small one, could ever be home to me. But I had come to know that, to the thinking being, all the world is home.

Wherever the heart has felt, the mind learned,





wherever they have awakened to more knowledge of themselves and their capacities, there they find that which makes home to them, there they must leave somewhat of themselves, and thence must carry backward-glancing remembrance.

## CHAPTER XXXI.

### “In the House of A Stranger”

“O that 'twere possible  
After long grief and pain  
To find the arms of my true love  
Round me once again!”

My possessions were packed, my farewells made; I was to leave for Texas the day after Christmas.

Mrs. Corcoran and I had purchased a Christmas tree, for which she much lamented that we had not first measured the flat.

Teddy had been put out of the room so many times, and shrieked at so frequently when about to discover some holiday secret, that he stole about with the big tears ready to brim his eyes at the first breath of reproof.

Having purchased the tree, Mrs. Corcoran and I sat up most of the night before Christmas trimming it. We drew the portières between the dining-room and the room where Teddy lay, spiking them together with a hat-pin, and whispered our comments. But that hardy buccaneer (wooing calls and entreaties having failed) twice scrambled from his couch, and, voyaging as far as the curtains, put a small inquisitive nose through, and remarked, “Peep-boo!”

Bundled sharply back to bed, he continued to call forgivingly, "Peep-boo! I love oo, muvver. I love oo, Tarry. I love oo, bofes of oo," till he fell, finally, asleep.

It seemed to me that I myself had slept but a moment when the wise virgin Lottie, who had read for me the hearts of men, brought in a card and waked me. Nobody else was up. The gentleman had asked for just me, and told her to disturb no one else.

I sat up, drew my dressing-gown about me and read upon the bit of pasteboard the name of Francis Randolph's secretary.

"Tell Mr. Brant that I will be there immediately," I said, fumbling with shaking fingers for my slippers.

A few moments later I was crying softly — for even terror and grief must be restrained vocally in a flat — "What is it? Tell me now — oh, tell me at once! I can bear anything but waiting."

The tall boy whom I had learned to know well in the happiest times of my love for Frank, who had often worked with us in the little studio, rose and came to me with both hands outstretched.

"Don't be so frightened, Miss West," he said gently, as he took my cold fingers and put me into a chair. "I was awfully thoughtless to come here at this hour. I have been up all night, and I did not realise that it was so early."

I sat, dumb with sheer terror, dreading to ask his errand, wishing I were deaf, that I need never hear it. "It is only because it is Christmas," I faltered finally, scanning his face with apprehensive eyes. "We are usually breakfasting at this hour. What is it?"

"Mr. Randolph sent me," he began — I drew a great sigh of relief.

"He wanted me to ask you to come to him, some time to-day."

"Where is he?" my lips shaped almost automatically.

"He is in — that is, he is not at his rooms."

"Where is he?" I breathed again, rising. "I will go to him at once. Will you wait and take me to him now? I will not keep you long."

I have some vague remembrance of Lottie, with the tears running down her patient little freckled nose, bringing me one tan shoe and one black one; of my trying, in a hurried, preoccupied fashion, to put my street garb on over my dressing-gown; and finally of dear little Mrs. Corcoran coming in and taking me in her arms, saying over and over: "You poor girl! You are not to blame. Nobody could have a kinder heart than you have, Cara."

I wondered dully what my kind heart had to do with anything; and once out in the snowy street with Harry Brant, I asked him again where he was taking me — where Frank was.

The streets were gay with new-fallen snow, and almost empty, save for the cheerful cleaning brigade and a lively chattering of sparrows.

Harry put me in the carriage, just nodded with a single low-spoken word to the driver, and we turned and drove out Seventy-fourth Street to Ninth Avenue and then down it.

On the way Harry began with the hesitating query, "You knew that Mrs. Randolph was dead, did you, Miss Cara?"

I answered that I did not. Mr. Corcoran was

suffering from a feverish cold, and had not been down to the office for several days.

"The funeral was last Wednesday," the boy went on. "Mr. Randolph got to New York on Thursday night, and went directly to Doctor Jay Conway Lansing's to see a friend. I was with him. He was not at all well, and he had a shock — a — well, a shock. That is two days ago, now, you know. He is better, and wants very much to see you."

"Doctor Jay Conway Lansing's?" I repeated, trying to think what that name ought to recall to me.

"Why, yes," returned Harry, flushing uneasily. "That was where Mr. Randolph's friend was, you know. He — Miss Cara, he is quite safe; he is much better now, and he wants to tell you about it all himself. I was only to assure you that he is safe and desires to see you."

I framed some small further query as to Frank's present state, which brought me another reassuring reply, and some details as to the last illness and death of Frank's mother.

When we turned in at the gate, I was a little surprised to note that "Doctor Lansing's" was a hospital, and not a private house.

I saw the doctors, the white-capped nurses, the long, glimmering corridors, as in a dream. Still as one who dreams, I heard and answered the questions which were put to me, and then a door was pushed open, a tall, fine-looking woman in a nurse's cap said to Harry, "Oh, yes, he is quite safe — out of all danger."

We were about to enter another door, when it opened, and a man came quickly and softly out, whom Harry called Doctor Lansing.

"Is this she?" he inquired, taking me by the shoulder with easy authority, and added instantly, with a keen, kindly, reassuring look at me:

"Go in directly, my dear. You are the only medicine needed now. Go immediately to him, or he will be trying to rise to receive you. Don't let him do so — don't let him attempt to stand, to sit, or even to raise his head. That is all." And with a smile and a reassuring pat upon the shoulder he had held, he opened the door, and Harry and I passed through it. Harry motioned me forward to the inner room, and drew the heavy curtain across behind me.

And there on a couch by the window, his face turned eagerly toward the doorway, lay Frank, fully, indeed scrupulously dressed, but with a light wrap thrown over him.

It needed not Doctor Lansing's admonition to hasten my steps, when I saw the marks of these bitter months and his brief illness upon his dear face, and noted his instant effort to rise.

I was across the room almost in a breath, kneeling beside the couch, my face leaned to Frank's, whispering only, "I am so sorry. Can I help any?"

He looked at me long and piteously before he kissed me. "Do you really care to come back to me?" he whispered. "I wonder at you, dearest. I wonder at the hearts of women. You know what I said, and even you do not know what I felt, when we parted. I told you I would never open a letter of yours, that I would never hear a message from you. Didn't I? Was not that what I said?"

"Oh, Frank, do not" —

"No, dearest, let me speak. Let me tell you all. I hardly believe you knew how fiercely resentful

I felt toward you when I went to Virginia. I felt that you, not I — had made the gulf which was between us. I blamed you with it all, and myself not one whit. I was simply blind to your side of it. To me, your course was a wanton, causeless cruelty, and I said to myself over and over that you must not come, woman fashion, repenting of it, to patch a half-hearted peace, and then do this blind foolish cruelty over. I promised myself that I would accept no letter from you — Cara, did you ever think of writing to me?"

"I was writing letters to you all my waking hours," I answered him. "That was my one dream."

"And I was receiving them and tearing them up, or sending them back unopened. Can you forgive me that, too, dear? Sometimes the things which are thought and not done are hardest to pardon."

I nodded, with my lips pressed hard together, and my eyes full of tears. This was bitter, but I managed finally to whisper, "I have forgotten it, Frank."

"That is better than forgiving," he said. "Why sweetheart, look at it. I was going to be a sort of god, wasn't I? I was not going to receive your messengers. But they were inside the fortress; the very blood in my veins kept you with me, till I thought I should go mad. Then came the telegram announcing my mother's illness. That is what I want to tell you about."

He was silent so long after that, that I said finally, "Don't speak of it, if it hurts you to do so."

"No," he answered, "it will be a relief. I am the youngest, you know, Cara, the baby of the family — her baby, whom she loved to call pet

names. They sent for me when they believed that she was not really ill, but just discouraged and unhappy. There had been trouble. She was called upon, for the first time in her life, to face disgrace. Do you know about my sister's husband, Cara?"

I shook my head.

"He left her and absconded about four months ago. He had beggared the lot of us, gambling in futures, and one thing and another. He was managing the estate there at home, and when he saw the ruin that was coming, he converted what he could into cash and fled. They thought it was the shock of it which made my mother ill."

I felt that Frank would be a tower of strength in such a household as this man must have left behind.

"My eldest brother is abroad, you know" (Fithian Randolph was minister to some South American State). "Henry was out of health and wintering in Bermuda, where they get mail but once in two weeks. He is at home now, but when I went there was only mother and my sister Lee, with the cousins you met in Washington.

"Ours is an iron property; up there in the Virginia mountains; magnetic ore mines, and a blast furnace. My brother-in-law had left things in such condition that the furnace fires were let to go out, making a loss of twenty or thirty thousand dollars—indeed, almost destroying the furnace; and worst, the men came clamouring unpaid, and my poor women felt that the deluge had arrived. They thought it no wonder that even my brave-hearted mother took to her bed.

"When I came, and matters were straightened



out, as nearly as they could be with the spectacle of poor Lee's wretchedness before us, and the sight of her fatherless children, mother did not recover as we had hoped.

"We had a medical consultation, and the agreement seemed to be that she would really be in a dangerous state soon unless she could be roused to understand her condition. The doctors thought such rousing would come better from me than from one of them. I had been there five weeks then, and instead of being better, she was rather worse. The plan was that I should go in and remind her how much depended upon her, urge her to make an effort, speak almost harshly — all for her good." He shaded his eyes with his hand.

"But you wouldn't do that, Frank," I said confidently. I remembered his devotion to his mother. "You would have understood, whether they did or not. You would know."

"No, I didn't understand," he said wearily. "I begin to believe that I have been a great, stupid, overbearing brute all my days. I let them persuade me to go in and scold her. She was lying on a low couch, which she had had them bring before the fire for her. You know I told you she was always the most beautiful and the sweetest creature in the world to me. She took my foolish boy's talk very sweetly. 'Francie,' she said, — that was her baby name for me, — 'I take the medicine this poor fellow leaves for me, so that I may not hurt his feelings. I went to Doctor Leith a year ago, and he gave me then six months to stay with you all. I did not want to go, son; I wanted to stay and see my baby happy in a home of his own; and I have held

on for twice the time Robert Leith gave me; but I begin to feel that I am worn out; I can't try any more.' "

My heart was so full of pity for poor Frank that again I urged him to tell me no more.

"No, no, let me tell you all about her," he persisted. "You can never know her now, and somehow the talking of her to you helps the pain of that disappointment. She was the brightest, bravest spirit that was ever lodged in a frail tenement. The rheumatism from which she always suffered had attacked the valves of the heart. There must have been much pain, but she made no sign. They had not thought, at home there, that she seemed ailing or distressed during the past year. But now, when reckoning was made, they could see how she had steadily failed.

" 'Why son,' she said, with a little whispered laugh, as I sat beside her and fondled her hand, and wondered what was the earliest possible instant that we could expect Doctor Leith, and if he could do any good when he came, 'Why son, I am near seventy, and very tired. I have been living for a year not only against Doctor Leith's convictions, but against my own. I should be away, dear — I should be away. But before I go I must have a long, long talk with my boy.' And then, Cara, she spoke of you."

"Of me!" I cried.

"Yes," he answered. "She never heard of you. She never saw you, but I can call it nothing else."

" 'I want to talk to you, my son,' she said to me, 'about the woman you love' — you see she spoke of you, Cara. I suppose she meant that if there were

not already such a woman, there would be some day after she was gone. But oh, my dear, it seemed as though death had made her eyes so clear that she knew all about us, you and me; for she began again: 'You must not treat her as men generally treat their wives, Francis. You are too good a man to fall into those errors, and you are my son. By the long dreary years of my own ruined life, I want you to promise me that you will ruin no woman's life for her.' "

"Cara, I felt as if the solid earth had slipped beneath my feet. Here was mother, my mother, the serenest, best content wife and mother, whom I had mentally held up to all restless dissatisfied womankind, talking to me of her ruined life. It was one of the eternal verities proving untrue.

"She answered my look, but not my words, 'Oh, yes,' she said, 'your father was a good man. He meant well. But Francie, if you will give a moment's thought to my situation, you must know what sort of life I have led. Why, my dear, it is my blood that is in your veins. They are my ambitions that you have carried out. Your father was a plain, quiet, slothful man. He had the Floyd indolence and the Randolph strength. But he was not willing to be lazy alone. I must sit down beside him and fold my hands, and lead a life that was a living death to me, for his pleasure. It's the Lee ambition you have — and that I had.'

"I looked over at my sister. I was in torment, Cara; and I asked, 'Won't it hurt her, Lee, to talk so much?'"

" 'Better let her have her say,' Lee answered me.

'We women are taught to die rather than speak out. Maybe it will be a relief to her.'

"I sat there all that night, Cara; and mother dozed and waked and rambled on. Oh, I got a lifetime's education in the heart of woman during those ten dark hours. I suppose I had to have it, little girl. It is likely I would not have accepted it from any other source; but it seemed to me, when it came in that way, that it was rending me soul from body. There were one or two things she said, dear, that were the same you have said to me, and which I have most resented from you. She said them in almost your words. And when I would look over to sister for a little help, she would nod to me and look at me out of those haggard eyes of hers; and I felt as though the whole world of women held me accused for a brute and a tyrant.

"Mother died next morning just as day was breaking. She had always been fragile, but somehow I never associated the idea of death with her, and when it came it seemed unbearable.

"We sat with her the next night again, sister and I alone. I would not let any of the rest of the family or friends do that for her. Again we talked all night. I had almost said that mother was silent that night; but it seemed to me, for part of the time, that she was more present in our conversation than she had been the night before.

"My God, Cara! Those two nights were two centuries of torment to me. It was like being born again; and the truth that was revealed to my shrinking eyes I can never forget. Lee began by speaking of her marriage. I was a boy of fifteen at the time she was married, but I remember how

pleased every one was with the match. She used to be a belle, poor girl, and the brightest, proudest, gayest creature; but she looked my mother's age as she sat beside me now.

" 'I was madly, insanely, foolishly happy,' she said. 'I was terribly in love with Dick. I remember as though it were yesterday, my wedding-day. Mother had turned all the girls out of the room, because, she said, she wanted to pin my veil and give the little final touches herself. I recollect looking up to her, as she worked over me, and saying, "Oh, mother, I am so happy, — I am so blest! Dick will just take me by the hand and lead me straight into heaven. My feet will never touch earth again."

" 'How little I understood the reproof she gave me. It was selfish and wrong, she said, for one person to depend so utterly upon another. I should neither expect Dick to make my happiness for me, nor should I promise to make his entirely. Mutual freedom, mutual help, this was the only basis of happiness in marriage. Oh, the kind, wise saint! I told her, too, that I should have no secrets from Dick; that my every thought should be his, and that I expected a like confidence in return. She said to me that this would be very monotonous. She laughed at me a little, and added that nobody ever did it, but that, if they did, it would be disastrously silly.'

"Sister told me what utter shipwreck her married life had come to, inside of a few months. 'I began, you know,' she said, 'with the idea of showing great deference to Dick's wishes. He was naturally overbearing, and because I never objected to anything, this disposition grew. My lack of oppo-

sition wrought his tyranny to a sort of frenzy. If he did not like a certain dress, I was never allowed to put it on a second time. The way in which my hair should be arranged was dictated; the books I should read; but most and oftenest, the people whom I should make my friends. Think of that, Francis. You remember a little of what I used to be as a girl; and think of me living like that! — I am actually happier now! As time went on, I began to find an absolute perversity in all the orders given me. I had only to express a liking for a person, an amusement, a desire for a journey, or a certain book, when the thing became anathema to him. The books, the things, the people which I did not like, I could have indefinitely; but let me like a thing, let me show a spark of interest in a thing, and it was tabooed for ever."

"But you are not like that, Frank!" I cried. "You were never like that."

"It is but a matter of degree, I think," said Frank. "I recognised my very spirit in it. Oh, I do not mean that I recognised it at first sight; but after those two women who, with yourself, are the creatures I love best in the world, had talked to me like unbodied souls through two long nights, I tell you I began to see things. Now, Cara, dearest, I don't advise you to take this man, Francis Randolph. But if your wayward heart still clings to him, why, there is one thing certain, love: you have a better bargain than you would have had three months ago. You have got a man who is fit to live with. Just prove me and see."

"I don't want any proofs," I said, laying my cheek against his.

"Oh, but you must have them. You shall have them," he murmured, putting up a wavering hand to caress my face. "Ah, you see, after all, I am a tyrant. I cannot help trying to make you do the things to which you object."

I slipped my arm under, and drew the beautiful head to me — into the hollow of my shoulder, my cheek upon the clustering dark hair; and Frank nestled there like a weary child who has found its mother's arms at last.

"Frank," I said, softly.

"Yes, Carita, my darling."

"I think in all these months — there are thirteen of them, now — since we sat and talked together in the train, I never looked at this dear, beautiful head of yours without the fleeting thought of holding it so on my arm, my breast. You say you are three years older than I, but —"

"Yes, I know, dearest. You must remember I said I loved your mother-like as well as lover-like heart. I believe the mother attitude is the loving woman's attitude toward all mankind — including her father and her grandfather."

Presently Frank began again:

"It is blessed and sweet of you, and everything that is dear, to come to me with a heart full of forgiveness. It is like you, Cara, but it is not what I was expecting — not what I deserve."

"You are to deserve everything," I murmured.

"I sent for you," Frank went on, "dear little tender-hearted girl, to tell you something which will hurt you less, I think, from me than another. Bushrod died Thursday night here in this hospital."

My arm relaxed; I laid Frank's head gently back

on his pillows. Then I got up, blindly, went over to the window, and looked out with unseeing eyes over the many roofs and chimneys. Such hives of humanity — and not one place in it for that poor soul! Again I saw him as on that last day, dishevelled, torn, put from himself. The recollection was unbearable. "Did Jim tell you?" I asked in a choking voice.

"Yes, love, he told me. Come and sit by me, dear. I have something to show you."

I went and sat by his pillow, on a low seat, and he began, slowly, and barely above a whisper.

"When we got back to the house from my mother's funeral, Jim was there. He did not apologise for having come, though I could see he would not have done so if he had been informed. You know I always liked him; that fine, frank face of his would always be good to meet — and then he had just come from seeing and being with you, and my heart cried out for some knowledge of you.

"He was waiting for me in the library, and when I came to him, he gripped my hand, then put his own on my shoulder and told me — in that wonderful, brief, yet feeling way of his, about Bush. He said:

" 'Mr. Randolph, he is not getting well as he ought — a great fine fellow like Bush. I worried over him, and finally, yesterday, I hunted up Doctor Lansing himself, and asked him about it. He used a good many long technical words, but I finally made out that he was telling me that folks just die sometimes because they don't care to get well. As near as I could make out, it's — well, it is what they call in novels a broken heart. He said that Bush



needed somebody else's cheer and strength; somebody who loved him and — and believed in him — because he'd got where he couldn't believe in himself. He said that if Bush had a relative — father, brother — who would come and give him a big lift, it might do the trick.'

" 'All right, Jim,' I said, 'I will go to-morrow morning — I will be there Thursday night.' "

Frank put out his hand and took mine, and said, something in his old tone, "That Texan of yours is a real man. Think of it, dear. I was poor Bush's cousin; we were like brothers; and at the last he receives brotherly kindness from this man, born a thousand miles from his home, and who was almost a stranger to him. It was my part only to goad the poor fellow, to bring his every petty failing home to him — when, God knows, I had enough in my own heart to look after."

I could not honestly say to him that he had not been cruel to his cousin; and this was an era of truth. He went on, "I sneered at him because he was weak. I was proud of my strength; and he had more love and more humanity in one of his days than I in all my miserable years."

"It can do no good to miscall yourself now, Frank. You did what seemed right to you. You couldn't see. You couldn't look forward!"

"You don't know how hard I was," said Frank (but I thought I did). "I remember the last time we talked together, it was about you, Cara. I told him — I threatened him" — the words seemed hard to get out, and then they came with a rush. "It was about the verses he had written to you."

"Oh, Frank," I cried, "not that!"

"Yes, that," said Frank. "I descended to that. Oh, you are to know the worst of me now, dearest; and then, as we used to say about superfluous puppies or kittens, 'You may kill me or keep me,' just as you choose."

"I keep you," I whispered, and he went on.

"You would never guess how Bush took it. At first that big, fair face of his puckered up like a baby's about to cry, and he said, 'Did she show you those poems, Frank Randolph? Did Cara do that?' When I told him that you had not, and that we had quarrelled because I found them and read them, he looked at me and his eyes glowed as if I had paid him a compliment.

"'So Cara thought enough of them to keep them in her table drawer, did she? God bless her heart!' he said. Then he turned to me and added, 'Why, for the Lord's sake, Frank, you're not jealous of me! You know it doesn't count, that it doesn't make any difference. Her being kind to me wouldn't take anything from you! If I were in your place, I'd as soon be jealous of a dead man.'"

I stopped him, gently. "Don't, dearest," I said. "He wouldn't have wished to hurt you—don't try to hurt yourself. Tell me how he went away, instead. Why, I thought he was to be well and strong, and go out to visit Jim."

"Yes, dear, we thought that. It came on me, the suddenest, hardest blow of anything; for I had thought to—to make things so different," and his eyes sought mine sadly.

"I came straight here from the train. I had young Brant with me. They met me at the door, and, when I gave my name, took us immediately to a

private room. I caught sight of Bush as we went in, and hurried to the bed, saying, 'Why, old man, this won't do!' or something of that sort. Then, in an instant, I saw and felt a start of surprise in those about, went and put my hand on Bush's face, and found it cold!

"Something that had been tied up tight in my head for weeks gave way. I heard Harry cry out, and never knew anything more till a few hours ago."

"Why, dear, how could such a thing happen?" I asked, resentfully. "Why did they not tell you?"

"They were not to blame," explained Frank, "they had sent to my rooms the moment they knew he was dead. They supposed I had come in response to the message."

After a moment's silence Frank asked, softly, "Shall I tell you now how he died, Cara? I wanted to tell you myself, you know, dear."

"Frank," I said as low, leaning my cheek beside his, "love is a great, big, heavenly thing. . It is not so small that it can only hold two people. You know — do you? — I loved — I love Bushrod."

"How could you help it, my loving darling?" returned Frank gently. "Poor Bush was nothing but love — and he adored you, humbly."

"He — I don't know whether I can say it so you will understand me, dear — he —"

"I believe I shall. Go on, my little girl."

"There was a kind of sweetness, of nearness — that is it, nearness — I felt toward him, Frank; more than toward — even — even you."

Frank smiled, and pressed my hand comprehendingly, and I went on. "I don't know, somehow — he asked so little — there could never be anything

for him, it seemed to me. I felt an aching tenderness for him. I could not bear the thought of his failures — of his being hurt — of what life would do to him. I think it is the mother in every woman, which cried out in me for poor Bushrod. Surely, if he had been something of my own, my little helpless child, I could not have yearned in deeper pity and tenderness over him and his griefs."

"Yes, dear, I do comprehend. And now, Carita," he said, huskily, "the thing I have to show you — it is his last word — poor boy. He had written a portion of this letter, and on Thursday afternoon the nurse urged him to sleep, and refused to give him back his paper and pencils. She said he laughed and coaxed her — you know how winning he could be. She wept when she told me. She finally let him have a pencil, and he took her tiny pad of prescription papers from the stand, and was, she thought, writing a few moments, till he slept. She never left the room, but when she went to him a little later she found that he slept indeed."

I was crying quietly. Frank's pale, pathetic face looked at me, with its sorrowful eyes, and he went on:

"I thought at first that it would hurt you too much — that I would not give it to you. And then I asked myself, who was I, to deny him his last word to the woman he loved? It is what I would have done while he lived — it is what I did do, Cara. Now I cannot shut the door upon his pleading face — you must see it — even though the sight teach you to hate me afresh."

Frank reached to the little table beside him, opened a drawer and drew out a letter. I recognised the

frail, dainty characters, and a shiver of apprehension went through me.

I looked at this letter and the hand that proffered it to me, and at a stroke of remembrance Doctor Lansing's bright, many-windowed room, which after all was a sick-room in a hospital, dissolved from my vision. Again I stood in the library of the Randolph house in Washington, and listened to the bell-like monotone of Abdul Tewfik's voice. I was gazing into the crystal, with its dull green reflection from the silk below it. I could smell the faint odour of the roses whose heavy heads lay across my arm, and see the frail, scentless beauty of poor Bushrod's orchids mingled with them.

Here was my letter coming by Frank's hand, from Bushrod. Here was that letter which Abdul Tewfik had told me I was, even at that time, preparing.

Frank's voice recalled me.

"There are some allusions in it," he said, "which you may not understand. We were brought up together. He was a little older than I, and Cara, he loved you very dearly. I wanted you to read his letter here where my hand can reach you — and to try to forgive me, dear, for I can never forgive myself."

"Oh, Frank!" I whispered. "We will have only love and trust in our lives. There will be no room for hatred, or jealousy, or for even the poor ghost forgiveness."

And together we read the little packet of sheets. Of odd sizes and shapes they were, written, one could see, from time to time, and on such bits of paper as came to hand at the moment, though all were alike in tidiness, and in the daintiness of the little characters upon them.

## CHAPTER XXXII.

### “The Race Unrun”

“And like an army in the snow  
My days went by — a treacherous train,  
Each smiling as he struck his blow,  
Until I lay among them, slain.”

FIRST came a little packet of open sheets. Among them were desultory beginnings of sketches at top or corner, and the work seemed to have been commenced as a sort of diary.

“These were written when he began to fail,” Frank explained to me. “They tell me that when he was first brought here — before his mind cleared — his body mended rapidly. Then, one of the nurses says that he made some inquiries of her as to the date and manner of his coming, and that she thinks he questioned Jim, too, afterward. They were, as they always are, guarded and discreet in their answers — and as cheering, of course — as they could be; but you can see that a realisation of it all grew upon him — Read it, dear.”

I took up the first sheet and read:

“I can fence no longer with despair. I am spent. My limbs are powerless for flight or for defence. When I heard this morning from my nurse what day of the month this is, when I was brought here

— and how — (though, poor girl, she tried not to let me guess that last) it was as if my grim assailant thrust aside the feeble defence of hoping or forgetting which I had heretofore held between us like shielding, outspread hands, and laid his icy touch upon my heart. And all its broods of little nestling hopes spread their soft wings and fled in trembling flight where love's bright head had lit the way."

I turned and caught Frank's hand. "I cannot bear that he should have felt himself deserted," I breathed. "It was not so. Indeed I would — any or all of us would — have come to him at any time. Did no one tell him so?"

Frank shook his head. "It was not that. Read on," he answered; and I began again:

"To my questioning, she answered that a gentleman by the name of Baxter brought me here, and that he calls every day. He is to be allowed to see me to-morrow, if I continue to improve. With tears in her eyes — as though she cared, not as though she were paid to care for me only — she tells me that I am never to worry — it would be bad for me — that I shall soon be back among my friends.

"(O God, among my friends! Dear girl, with her pretty cap, her smooth hair, her kind, deft hands, and her mind stored with prim little speeches of consolation for the derelicts she handles, how little she could guess the blow she dealt me there!)

"She tells me daily that the doctor says if I am good, and try, and hope, I shall soon be well. And so I shall be. Soon — sooner than any of them think — I shall be so well that nothing of earthly ailing can touch me further.

"I am to struggle — I, for whom all struggles

are over — to fan and blow upon this waning spark, that it may smoulder yet a little longer, and burn me once more before I am at rest!

"But I will not. I am done with it.

. . . . .

"I slept last night, and dreamed a little foolish dream that waked me laughing. I thought that we were all children again at home in Virginia. I could see the big, bare old nursery in the glow of fire and lamplight, and Mammy Calline going to and fro to lay out our clothes for Sunday.

"Once, when the new things were bought, I, the taller by a head, must have a larger suit. And Frank, a young senator of six, than whom none must require a longer toga, cried himself sick at the thought. I remember that I comforted him by promising that we should exchange suits when the clothes came home. What the outcome was, I have forgotten, except that I stole from my small bed to his, and we went to sleep in each other's arms, planning to outwit Mammy Calline in the morning.

"Something of this mixed in my dream with Aunt Virginia calling us to her knee, as she often did, and saying: 'You are both my dear boys, and mean always to be good; but Bushrod must remember that he is the elder and knows better what is to be done — and Francie must remember that, too.'

"If I had died then — If — — —"

The text was broken here by pencilled outlines, a leaf, a bit of curving border; and later the voice resumed in a new note:

"What curious things life gives us; not always stones for bread or serpents for fish, but often gro-



tesquely inappropriate gifts which we cannot use. I remember the saying Lee had, that it was good for Francie and good for me that both should know and bear in mind I was the taller and handsomer boy. I can see her radiant young face puckered to a loving intentness, and feel her slim, jewelled hand on my shoulder. God bless her, the young belle and beauty with the country-side at her feet, who found time in her full and happy life to be kind to an oversensitive child. I would at any time have been willing to be stunted and ugly that I might be loved; and I had always a terror of any gift that brought me envy.

"If I had died then! If I had died then —

"Cruel life! It has stolen my years — my lovely years, in which I might have lain still and been at rest in the all-healing arms of compassionate death — and has filled them with hopes, longings, hungers for which it had never fruition, food, or answer; dreams and aspirations that but left its own hideousness more bare and terrible when they withered and died. It has demanded of me struggles that were always vain and brought only wounds to my empty hands.

I lifted my head. Frank's eyes met mine with a look of intolerable pain. "You see, Cara, while I was reproaching him with his inertia, that he did not make haste to tread the path I had marked out for him, the poor, tender soul was fighting his own battles upon the terrible battlefield of the spirit. If I had dreamed of his hopes — his ambitions — "

I turned my eyes away, and lifted another of the tiny sheets.

"And last, it gave me Love; to snatch him from

my arms while yet my lips blessed it for the boon. It showed me delight, and while my enraptured heart fainted upon the threshold of its beautiful, unattainable joy, it robbed me so that there was no creature so poor and desolate.

“It has always thwarted and deceived me; now it has betrayed my soul utterly to pain and shame, thrust me into a corner, and turned its face from me.

“And who shall say I dare not be quit of it, and creep beneath the kindly curtain?

“I remember now a home-coming from school (to that home which is mine no more). I remember another when I was a man grown, and had been abroad. I returned, bringing success and failure in about equal measure. I had done well enough, as human achievement is reckoned. Those who loved me were still willing to tincture their blame with praise. But I — I was appalled, abraded in mind and spirit, grieved in soul by the cruelty of men to men, the remorselessness of life to its victims.

“I had then some inkling — some faint foreshadowing — of what I know now, when I lie here through long nights and stare at the ceiling and feel myself a part of the great ache.

“When the final knowledge of disaster came to me here, this body of flesh seemed to me only a flimsy and inadequate vessel to hold the fires of grief and shame and agony which raged in it. Swinburne, or Rossetti, or some one of that school has written:

“‘Where, when the gods would be cruel.  
Do they go for a torture? Where

Plant thorns, set pain like a jewel?  
Ah, not in the flesh — not there!

“ ‘ Mere pangs corrode and consume,  
Dead when life dies in the brain;  
In the infinite spirit is room  
For the pulse of an infinite pain.’

“ I could never recover from those seizures of despair like a brave soldier ready to renew an attack; but I must creep back like a young and trusting child, and, cheating myself with hope, try once more to be friends with the world.

“ And so perhaps, when I shall have lain for ages — pillowed upon repose, lapped and folded in ineffable calm as in a garment, brooded by sweet forgetfulness, tented with soft darkness and surcease, walled about and guarded by silence, deep in the impenetrable heart of trackless and untrodden void — if my spirit, soothed and comforted, were then clothed again in flesh, it might yet come that it should be well with me — even here — even here upon this earth where I have failed so irreclaimably.

. . . . .  
“ You came to me like a sweet native tongue to an exiled and homesick heart amid surrounding jargon. It needed not that you should have beauty and grace and genius. These things were dear; my heart was pleased that they were so; but it was the spirit back of these that looked out and commanded my love. You entered my life upon its simple, daily, common ways, glanced about, and spoke and smiled; and my soul — knew you, I would have said — no, it remembered you.

“ And with that remembrance came those days

when I worked gladly, and my work prospered, because I was love's guest, and all harms and base things shrunk aside from his bright panoply in which I walked.

"No check could touch me in those blessed days, no disappointment chill the glow of life. Love held me apart from sense or knowledge of discouragement or defeat; and I talked or wrote to others as to but slight masks over the loved face and spirit, till the world and the universe looked and spoke back to me with those dear eyes and that dear voice."

I had read so far, before I became suddenly aware that the words were addressed personally to me. The next page showed me that they were indeed.

"The shadow is on us from our birth. We always tremble over the possession of too perfect a happiness. Something that never hurts at all — such a joy would certainly soon be torn from us. But when it comes as this came to me (the precious boon, the fulfilment of all sweet dreams) bringing with it so much of pain — when the thought of an inevitable and speedy parting tempered all my joy at meeting, and my few snatched hours of sweet companionship were but bits of drift from that great sea of absence and longing that still swelled — that must always swell — dark between me and my heart's desire, I thought I might dare, away in some secret chamber of my heart where fate could not see me at all, to be happy in the belief that such a happiness would be left me awhile.

"But it could not be. This happiness of mine was shadowed and fragmentary — but it was divine. Not here, oh, not here in this dusk antechamber, is it to a man to safely light his little taper with fire

from Heaven's altars, and feed his yearning soul upon celestial bread, and wine from sacred vessels.

. . . . .

"I look back now — it seems a long time — to that moment when I waked here to full knowledge that the end had come; that my blind stumbling steps had led to a place whence I could never retrace them, never find a way back to life and the things of life. I remember with pity — as though it were another's — my incredulous agony, and how I yet clung to the empty body of my life that had held my love, as people cling weeping and remonstrant to the body of a dear one after the spirit is gone.

"I could not know then, as I know now, how simple was the remedy for my suffering. I could not turn my back, at once, upon a world which had but a few weeks gone given me such happiness, and which yet held you — even though not for me.

"With my lips I said nothing, while in my soul I rebelled and cried out like a sick and peevish child at so much as a thought of the only physic that could medicine my ill. But all is changed now, and, no longer captious or critical, I stretch eager hands toward the welcome cup, thanking the stern physician humbly.

. . . . .

"This is a sweet, gray afternoon. I wakened a little while ago from an hour's quiet sleep. It is the first slumber I have known for weeks which was not dream-haunted, and from which I aroused without foreboding. Something has come to me; a new word has been spoken to my spirit. It is peace.

"They call such surrender as this of mine ignoble.

—

We are admonished to bear our burdens; never to lay them down, nor cease to strive and contend and endure. They warn us that the soul which faints beneath life's whip, and hurries unbidden to its rest, goes but to find a fiercer scourge.

"But I have a sort of assurance that I am right. Here in my heart, there is now a peace so great and blessed that I cannot find any word to describe it. There are things — grand organ tones; the silent, crystal moonlight brooding on a sleeping world; the calm of twilight in deep woods; the great sea lying hushed under its solemn stars; these should shadow forth something of my peace, my pure, blessed, steadfast peace.

"My idea of heaven was never rapture. I have known moments of rapture here, and I learned to fear them, and to expect close in their fleeing footsteps, those their haunting followers and pursuers, pain, grief, loss, regret.

. . . . .

"I know that when I am gone where I am going, and have left it all, they will still strike at each other. The strong will still break the hearts of the weak who love them; souls will be hungered, even to death, and fain to feed — though feeling the shame — on husks of shame. But those who, like me unmailed, are torn most cruelly by the tusks of life, who must fulfil their divinely appointed destiny and love unquestioning, uncounting, nor ever learn a cold and prudent thrift of soul; whose eyes are affrayed and their souls daunted by the inexorable conflict where all seems to go down that young hope had sworn should conquer — I will not think of

them! Their agony, as it is bitterest, shall be briefest. My spiritual kindred, whose reproofs I might now dread, shall come first to creep in beside me, when life has broken them on its wheel, whispering to me, then, that out of all my mistakes and failures and weaknesses I yet found a remedy, and at the last I was wise."

Here ended the tiny sheets. The remainder was folded like a letter, but no name was written upon it. It ran:

"There is, I think, in all this big world, one creature who knows and loves me. To that one, then, I offer my last word. It shall be my explanation and my excuse.

"Once more I am down. It is the last failure. I never can rise again. I have no wish to. I have only a craving hunger for rest — not reprieve, but release, final and entire.

"Always before I have hoped; I have wanted to retrieve, to struggle on, and wring a reluctant victory from the bitter ashes of my defeat. But now, it is as though I had tasted in anticipation the waters of some precious and forbidden Lethe.

"I have turned and grasped eagerly — as though it were a new thing — the idea of death, and it satisfies. For life, which, in my secret heart, I have loved so ardently, which I have followed and trusted and looked to with such a passion of hope and belief — for life, I have no other feeling than terror and hatred. If it had shown me at the outset half its bitterness and falseness, I should long since have burst my fetters and been free. But like a heartless and cruel coquette it has led me on from year to year hoping against despair, with but enough of

favour to keep the sick and cheated heart from breaking, till the things which my soul refused to touch are become my sorrowful meat.

. . . . .

"I cannot think that mine was more than an innocent and commendable pride and hope. Surely it is but just that young, sound, well-dowered creatures should have and be happy in thus much expectation and gladness — a trust which carries much of its own fulfilment with it. Yet it seemed to me that my innocent trust in life had been held by life a crime, and dashed back in my face as coals of grief and pain and shame.

"Even after I had been struck many times, I had faith and anticipation, and a certain belief in the ultimate kindness of life which seemed inextinguishable. The worst (I said) would never befall me. Surely never could my hope and confidence shrink to the measure of despair. Surely never could they come creeping, distained and rejected, to cower shuddering in that darkness of which we cannot endure to speak out to ourselves and say, 'This is ruin.'

"But those places of injury and cruelty so terrible, whither, I said, no trusting creature, no spirit of the finer sort, would ever be thrust, those things how soul-withering, how unspeakable, of which I said that such, at least, could never by any — even the evillest event — come upon me; see now, those are the places where I lie broken, not protesting, endeavouring no more; those things are the things of my life. I have fallen to this, that I endure them and live. They blast and rend and ravage me unresisted.



“ And would you, O very heart of my heart, can you say you hold it an offence in me — can it cause you to remember me with horror — that all these deep and cureless wounds which life has dealt me have made me to desire death as the only remaining good, to yearn for it and long to lay hold upon it? But the thought of its beauty, its sweet and balmy stillness, is all alone in my heart.

. . . . .

“ I would have you think, as I do, willingly, gladly, almost triumphantly, that this coherent dust which now is me may be afterward blown and shifted about by joyous airs, or bleak and unkind winds, or it may lie dank and hidden from the sun’s eye. It may redden in some wayside blossom, or swell in the throat of some singing bird. But, ah, wherever it go, whatever it be in the Plan, the coal that burned it, the sting that pierced, the poison that maddened — this striving, quivering, shrinking sentence — shall have been quenched and soothed and healed by cycles and seas of cool oblivion.

. . . . .

“ Now that you know how it is with me, and how it has gone with me, the last thread that stayed me is snapped, the last barrier removed. I believe I know the country of your mind so well — that fair, liberal, candid region, and so tender and loyal, too — that I dare to think I go taking your forgiveness — I had almost said your approval — with me.

. . . . .

“ It draws toward evening. This is a very quiet, kind hour. I have finished my message, and set the



house of my heart in order. And as in these long nights of feverish wakefulness I have fixed my mind on sleep to compel it, so now I fix my soul on death to compel it. And it is near — I feel that it is near. The peace shed about me is the very breath of that air beyond the curtain.

"And the curtain itself rises — it trembles — it is withdr—"

. . . . .

"He was dead, with a look of calm assurance and settled peace upon his face, the pencil in his hand, and the last word on the pad, as you see, not completed, when the nurse came to him," said Frank, whisperingly, as we finished reading the last page, where the tiny characters seemed to stagger feebly and ever more feebly across in a wavering line to that uncompleted word.

## CHAPTER XXXIII.

### Hearts Triumphant

"Sing ho, for the meadows that reach the sky!  
The boundless meadows, where you and I  
May ride, may ride at our own sweet will,  
With never a hollow, and never a hill.  
While our ponies bound at the spoken word  
And the wind sings past like a singing bird.  
Sing ho, for the meadows that reach the sky!  
When day grows old, and night draws nigh."

FRANK and I had been for three weeks in that country which is my own country, irrespective of the land in which I was born or the place in which I may be sojourning. We were staying on Jim Baxter's Panhandle ranch, the *Tres Hermanos*, near the *Ojo Bravo*, having been quietly married soon after Frank's recovery and come directly to Texas.

I had ridden on those plains many a time alone, lonely, with an unquiet heart and a restless, questioning mind. To-day I had the great brown limitless stretches spread before my pony's willing feet, and beside me galloped that one whom in my despair I had given up, of whom I had said, "Companionship with him — as he could be — is not to be had by any mere mortal in this world. It is too near paradise. It will never come true."

Harry Brant was with us now. He had brought



"WE RODE TO THE ROUND-UP"





the machines and all the paraphernalia of the work my husband and I loved; for the DeWitts were still abroad, and the magazine to make its bow to the public within a few months, and there was much to do.

Hank Pearsall for a time stood off from my new acquisition, waiting evidently to accept him as he should prove his worth, desiring to decide at leisure upon his merits. That this husband I had brought back with me was an Eastern man was, of course, a point against him; but when I saw Frank ride to a round-up with my old friend, I doubted not the result.

This round-up was a pleasure I had not anticipated, since the month was February, too late for the latest fall round-ups, and too early for the earliest spring work. But Jim's Panhandle cattle-ranch lies near the headquarters of the Texas Cattle Syndicate, — or in local parlance, the L Q K, since ranches are universally designated by the name of their brand. This is the biggest ranch in Texas, running as it does into nine of those great Panhandle counties, enclosing three million acres of that noble plains pasture-land, and having upon its western boundary an unbroken line of barbed wire fence something over two hundred miles in length. The L Q K was unexpectedly making a big shift of two-year-olds to their fattening ranges; and the round-up was for the purpose of cutting them out and bunching them ready for the trail.

The two men had ridden away together to the round-up, and when I followed later, with Harry Brant, I found Frank in the thick of it.

The last stragglers had been brought from out-

lying pastures, and were being thrown into the big bunch as we came up. Frank, on my own Little Bronc, was displaying his usual address and intrepidity, demonstrating that a man who can handle men can handle cattle.

He had set out, unaided, to put into the bunch of two-year-olds a brindled steer of the original Texas type, a creature with a bad eye and long, sharp, curved horns.

Health and a dauntless energy and his own peculiar cast of high spirits were Frank's once more. And as I watched him ride, my heart swelled, the blood fairly thrilled through my veins, and rose surge upon surge to my face, while the tears of excitement and enthusiasm blinded my eyes.

I sat apart on Nipper (who danced with amazed and disgusted impatience), and watched with keen delight the alert figure on the steely little blue roan cut in and out like zigzag lightning among cattle and horsemen, all grace, dash, and courage.

"I am a pagan," I said to myself, laughing joyously under my breath; "I am a savage, a barbarian, who should have lived two thousand years ago, and had a Gothic chief to husband. This, the man of my choice, who, since he first spoke to me, has held my heart in his lordly young hand, might have been an angel, speaking with the tongue of an angel, it would not so have set my pulses going, nor waked in me the enthusiasm of adoring admiration which springs to meet and praise and claim him here when he shines and surpasses in these feats of the primitive man."

The cowboys rode perfectly; Frank could do no more. But the boys lounged through their work

with the carelessness born of long usage; one missed the pride of the knight tilting at tourney under his lady's eyes, which was in every line of Frank's figure. I saw more than one admiring glance follow the blue roan and its rider.

He caught the eye and held the fancy, you would say, because this was new work to him, and he put into it an interest, a passion the others could not feel.

But there you have the secret of Frank's undying charm and mastery. Nothing ever became a grind, an old story to him. The moment his hands touched a work, or a pastime, it lived beneath them.

Once, the brindled steer turned viciously upon its pursuer. But Little Bronc — staunch little cowpony — was nothing daunted. He wheeled as instantly as the angry brute had done, and its long, sharp horn barely grazed his steely side. Frank, scarcely less quick than Little Bronc himself, leaned far over the pony's shoulder and dealt the fellow with the horns a savage cut with the big Mexican quirt that hung from his wrist.

At the outset of this scrimmage, I had seen, from the tail of my frightened eye, two of the boys near me wheel their ponies to go to Frank's assistance, and be restrained therefrom by a gesture from old Hank Pearsall.

With the intuitive understanding which one game sportsman has for another, he cautioned:

"Let the boy alone! Give him a fair chance to show whether he's a sure 'nough man, or a chump. He ain't a-goin' to stand by consentin' while a two-year-old Texas steer eats him up. He won't thank ye fer interferin'."



Brave words; but I heard a big breath of relief from Hank as the quirt descended and the steer turned to run again.

For myself, I was suddenly alive to the risks of this work. It came terribly home to me, that there was scarcely a season of round-ups in which some rider was not maimed, or killed outright; pitched upon his head and his neck broken, or the life crushed out by his pony falling on him. Every atom of my flesh became exquisitely aware of every indention and rabbit-burrow into which a pony's hoof might sink upon that plain.

I had known these dangers always; I had laughed at them, myself, in many a round-up, and many a hot run across the levels; but the sight of Frank riding amid them, was an illuminant. I was, however, like old Hank, too much in sympathy with the spirit which desires to prove itself upon all surroundings, to cry out or interfere.

But when, after a wild, scrambling race in the open, with half a dozen heart-shaking quick turns which would have unseated any but a perfect horseman, Frank finally landed his quarry in the bunch of two-year-olds, and returned panting, flushed and laughing, I found myself breathing once more, and under the impression that I had not done so since the tussle began.

As Frank approached me, Hank joined him, and they rode up together. Hank halted, with a hand thrown out on the younger man's shoulder. His shrewd, wrinkled, philosophical old face was all alight. He took in the brave, lithe young figure, from top to toe, with one of his slow, quizzical glances; then turned to me.

"Wal, y' seen 'im?" he began. "He done noble — now, wouldn't ye say so? I've been lookin' him over very careful, an' I say he'll do — he's all right. I wouldn't never spur him in the shoulder none, 'cause it's jest more'n likely he wouldn't stand it. Unless I've plumb lost my judgment, this colt's sound an' kind an' willin', an' a free traveller, ef ye jest give him the right sort o' treatment, an' no Mexican thorn bit business."

This to me. Then he shook Frank a little, gently, by the shoulder, and said, smiling over at me, "But I'll tell ye, Mr. Randolph, a lady that's been as able as any cowboy on the range — since she was a kid o' ten or twelve — to manage anything, from a cuttin' pony as fine as silk, to the meanest buckin' bronc in the outfit — I reckon that sort ain't likely to fail up much on any kind o' men-cattle; so I might as well jest give ye both my on-conditional blessin', which I herewith do," and with a smile and a wave of the hand he was away to the two-year-olds again.

A few days later we had ridden over to Emerald City for the mail, Frank and I, with Harry Brant and Jim. There were long, cheerful letters from everybody, it seemed to me. The DeWitts were at last in New York. Mr. DeWitt's communication was, he being a professional writer, just what he intended it should be. As for Mrs. DeWitt's letter, it was brief and cheery. Perhaps my own abundant content made me the more sympathetic to hear and respond to the content I found here. The note which had been sounded in my last interview with her ran all through this letter, the note of poise, of

rest, of cheerful decision after long debatement and painful uncertainty.

Frank's sister wrote from Dresden. He had, before we came West, gathered the means that were left her and invested them in such a way as to give her a little income. She had taken her two children abroad to educate them. This letter told us what Frank had never guessed to be possible, that she was resuming her own interrupted musical studies; preparing, not sadly nor resignedly, but gladly and hopefully, for a career to which she had once looked forward, and which she had given up for the sake of the man she married.

Genevieve's letter to me was delicious. She was working in the little Tenth Street studio upon the Encyclopedia of Chemistry which was dear to her soul. Lemuel had desired that she transmit a message for him. "Tell Mr. Randolph from me," he said, "that him and me has both made a big mistake. I told him it was better to have two of 'em, an' not to tie yourself up tight to any one of 'em, an' that's what he will find out before he gits done with it."

She informed us that Lemuel's matrimonial bark — launched after we had left New York — had come to early shipwreck, and that he was once more a gay bachelor, or rather, a blithe divorce-court widower, with his one eye fixed upon the eligibles among "nice stiddy, good-lookin', good-tempered gals" of the domestic class. And she added the — to her — amazing fact, that this little, old, limping rascal, with but one eye, seemed to find no difficulty in attracting a whole train of sighing damsels.

Frank and I laughed consumedly over this aston-

ishing statement; Harry, who contributed from his own experience, some very exquisite reminiscences of Lemuel, joined us, and I repeated the disconsolate Lottie's tearful dictum that "wimmenss iss poor weak creaturess, and menss — they knowss it."

"Little Lottie is mighty sound there," declared Harry. "That bit of knowledge is just about the whole stock in trade of the Lemuel population."

The tone in which Genevieve wrote of her work and her prospects was music to me.

The Corcorans, as is their wont, sent me a round-robin. Teddy's little hand had been guided to write his portion. It said, in a drunken version of Mr. Corcoran's fine, counting-house script: "Dear Carry: I love you still, if you did run away with him, so no more from your own Teddy. P. S. Please bring me a burro. P. S. Please come back soon. P. S. I love you."

Our young lovers were still in Mexico; and Mrs. Corcoran opined from their letter that they had not yet sufficiently recovered to know whether they were in Mexico or the moon. But she added, in her usual daintily ironical fashion, that she supposed we were in much the same case, and would not think strange of them.

And now, was I happy? Had the impossible come true?

Yes, and — as fairy tales only can come true in real life — in the quietest, simplest, sanest fashion. Mine was the pot of gold at the foot of the bow of promise; my unspoken longing had been brought to me from the other end of life's teleseme wire.

At first there was in Frank's manner toward me at times a hesitancy, a timidity, which, in a man of

his disposition, touched me inexpressibly, and showed me how entirely his attitude of mind, against which I had so desperately rebelled, had been error of belief and not lack of heart. He would begin some suggestion — timely and reasonably enough — and break off suddenly, questioning, “Am I tyrannical, Cara?” or declaring, “Oh, you do not need my suggestions at all. Choose for yourself, dear.”

We had at last, Frank and I, that liberty which two people very much in love will so seldom grant each other — to have, to pursue and enjoy, those two blessings in life, love and labour.

I felt no compulsion to set a bound upon my love for Frank, for it need not be a narrowing devotion; I was permitted to make it part of love for my kind. And it was the sweetest drop in my cup of blessedness to see how he won the admiration and liking of those about him, how the voice of bluff, free-born Texas was lifted to chant his praises.

We have founded that ideal partnership of sweet equality, whose bondage is freedom, whose allegiance is voluntary, its vows renewed every hour from an overflowing heart.

As we rode home southward across the vast turf-cushioned levels, with their grave smile lying upon them, the sun sank in red splendour on our right, and the great white moon of the plains country rose upon our left, majestic and refulgent.

Jim and Harry Brant drew gradually ahead, till we could hear only an occasional big note of Jim's deep-chested laugh, and see an arm thrown out to point or emphasise.

I was just aware of the pure profile and graceful shoulders rising and falling rhythmically beside me.

The whole created world was ours — the earth, and heaven, and sun, and moon.

Frank's face turned, smiling quietly, toward me, his hand reached for mine. We rode along at a silken lope, talking softly.

Frank's estate was almost entirely swallowed up in the crash which followed his brother-in-law's speculations. He had no fortune now; we had need to be enterprising. Our work would count. Frank brought his plans to me; he came to me for suggestions, for inspiration, as to a partner indeed. The outlook was very bright. The book which I had finished as a sort of sacrifice upon the grave of our dead love was now almost ready for the press, and promised us a modest fortune. We, as author and illustrator, and the house as publishers, would all profit by it.

And so we rode together all alone, between the beauties of the evening and the night, Nipper and Little Bronc loping stride for stride, as Texas ponies do, Frank's hand in mine, looking out of this our lonely, beautiful world of love, forward to that busy, crowded world of effort, labour, competition, which so attracts us both, and whither we shall presently return to take our places.

We are going back to work which is dear to us, and best — oh, most best — we are going back side by side, hand in hand, to live our lives together.

THE END.



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